

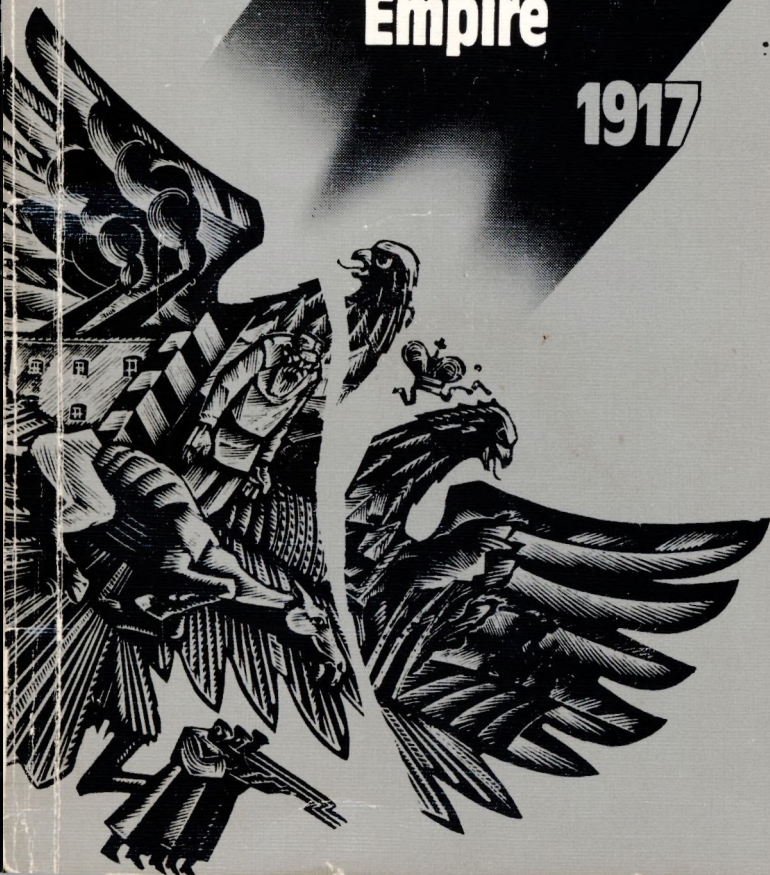


THE TRUE STORY OF THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION
AND THE BUILDING OF SOCIALISM

Avenir KORELIN
Stanislav TYUTYUKIN

The Collapse of the Russian Empire

1917





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"To the Russian workers has fallen the honour and the good fortune of being the first to start the revolution—the great and only legitimate and just war, the war of the oppressed against the oppressors."

V. I. Lenin. *Coll. Works*,
Vol. 23, p. 350



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Under the general editorship of Academician
Isaac Mints

Novosti Press Agency Publishing House

Progress Publishers
Moscow, 1980

10604

0505030101

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CONTENTS

I. RUSSIAN CONTRASTS	9
Advanced Industrial and Financial Capitalism Coupled with Medieval Land Ownership and an Archaic Political System	9
A Pyramid Ready to Collapse	25
The Prisonhouse of Nations	40
II. THE SEETHING BOILER: THE "SUMMIT" AND THE LOWER CLASSES	50
The Ruling Camp	50
"His Majesty's Opposition"	58
Proletarian and Peasant Revolutionary Democracy	70
III. THE FIRST WORLD WAR	88
Economic Ruin	88
The Agony of the Tsarist Regime	93
The People Fight While the Bourgeoisie Crawls to Power	101
The End of the Empire of the Double-Headed Eagle	115

The beginning of the 20th century was one of the most tempestuous periods in Russian history. The very first year of the new century was marked by the entry of Russia, until then a stronghold of world reactionary forces, into a period of a deep political crisis which encompassed all sections of Russian society. This crisis, steadily deepening and expanding, gave rise to the country's first bourgeois-democratic revolution in 1905-1907, spearheaded against the existing autocratic monarchic regime. The two years and a half of fierce fighting between the rebellious people and the tsarist government ended in the defeat of the revolution.¹

¹ The revolution began with the shooting of a peaceful workers' demonstration, on the tsar's orders, in St. Petersburg on January 9, 1905. The working class responded to this atrocity with political strikes keyed by the slogan "Down with the Autocracy." The immediate objectives of the revolution were to overthrow the tsarist autocracy, confiscate the landed estates, introduce an 8-hour working day and grant democratic rights to the people. Already in 1905 V. Lenin set the task of passing from a bourgeois-democratic revolution to a socialist one. The revolutionary upsurge reached the climax in an armed uprising in Moscow between December 9 and 18, 1905. The revolution was defeated because of its failure to secure concerted action by the workers, peasants and soldiers and the lack of unity within the party.

However, the forces of the revolution were not crushed. A new upsurge of the revolutionary movement began less than three years afterwards, and the country again faced barricades in the summer of 1914. The outbreak of the First World War only deferred the revolutionary explosion and the blast that occurred towards the end of the war was all the more vehement for that. In February 1917 another bourgeois-democratic revolution swept away the corrupt autocratic regime within a matter of days.

However, the problems the country was facing were so complex and wide-ranging, the antagonisms tearing Russian society apart so profound and acute, and the forces involved in the struggle so broad and diverse that even the victory of the February Revolution could not take Russia out of the impasse into which she had been brought by the ruling classes. Another, socialist, revolution became necessary to save the country from a national catastrophe. And that revolution climaxed in the creation of the world's first state of workers and peasants in October 1917.

So why did a socialist revolution become both necessary and inevitable in Russia? Why were the classical patterns of the bourgeois revolutions in the West not repeated? We shall attempt here to answer these questions.

I. RUSSIAN CONTRASTS

Advanced Industrial and Financial Capitalism Coupled with Medieval Land Ownership and an Archaic Political System

Every historical event has its own deep roots and this is all the more true of such a landmark as the 1917 October Revolution. Thus to see what caused the socialist revolution in Russia, we shall have to look back at the past, to the middle of the last century.

The purifying storms of bourgeois revolutions had already swept away the reign of the Dark Ages in most Western countries. But Russia, as a result of the desperate efforts of her feudal reactionary forces, had become frozen, as it were, and immune to the spirit of the times. As the French traveller Marquis Astolphe de Custine aptly remarked, Russia in those days was a seething boiler with a tightly closed lid put on a raging fire.¹

The country was heading for events pregnant with revolution, and the tsarist government appreciated the gravity of the situation. By the mid-19th century, the Russian autocracy faced the choice of either losing its dominant position or adapting somehow to the steadily developing capitalist trend. And after the infamous defeat in the Crimean War,

¹ Marquis de Custine. *Russia under Nicholas*, Moscow, 1930, p. 135.

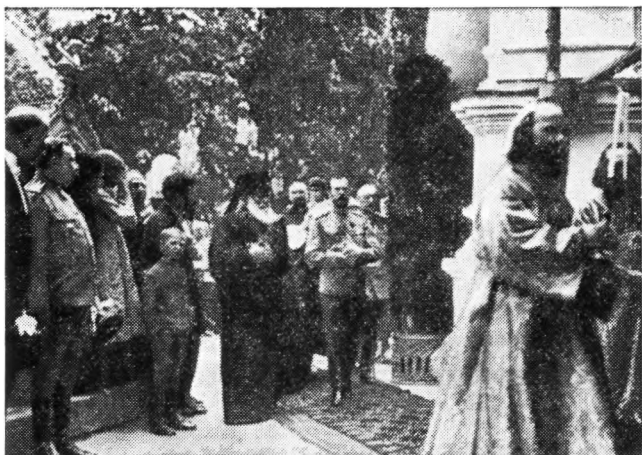
the autocracy was compelled to start implementing bourgeois reforms.

The abolition of serfdom in 1861 put an end to the peasants' personal dependence on the feudal lords and the lid of the seething boiler was thus slightly opened. Reforms in the 1860s and 1870s introduced independent courts and open, public trials, local self-government, conscription, etc., which gave Russia the semblance of a European country. Yet they only put off the inevitable explosion. The reforms, though bourgeois in essence, were carried through by feudal absolutism from "above." Their principal objective was to preserve as fully as possible the economic and political position of the ruling nobility and absolute monarchy. Small wonder therefore, that Russia's evolution along capitalist lines became both complex and contradictory.

On the one hand, the spontaneous development of capitalism was supplemented and speeded up by the official economic policy. The government sought to build up the country's military-economic potential and her international prestige as a great power as well as to lay a basis for the economic restructuring of the landed estates. To this end, the government was compelled artificially to speed up the development of a number of key sectors of the economy, primarily, heavy industry.

On the other hand, the autocracy had an instinctive presentiment about the destructive consequences of capitalist development for the absolutist regime, so it did all it could to channel this process along a safe course. However, having released the powerful jinnee out of the jar, absolutism tried in vain to remain his master.

It was a half-hearted, contradictory policy and in the long run it proved to be disastrous for the tsarist regime aggravating even more the principal



Religious service attended by Tsar Nicholas II to mark the 300th anniversary of the reign of the Romanovs. The authorities hoped that the celebrations would strengthen people's belief in the stability of the autocracy.

antagonism of post-reform Russia, that between the capitalist relations rapidly developing in every sphere of social life and the vestiges of feudalism.

In the few decades following 1861, Russia covered a path which had taken some of the leading Western countries centuries to traverse. New, modern industries such as the oil, coal, machine-building, electrical engineering, and chemical industries emerged within a historically short period of time. By 1914 the country already had about 30,000 factories, old industrial centres and economic areas were modernised and new ones came into being. These were linked by a network of railways whose total length by 1917 was over 80,000 kilometres, and in this respect Russia was second only to the United States. Modern means of communication such as the telephone and telegraph were also introduced.

Thus the Russian economy became part of the world capitalist system, and reacted sensitively to the pulsating cycles of the world economy—booms, crises and depressions. At times Russia picked up momentum, at others she moved ahead more slowly. Sometimes she lagged behind the United States and Germany in output growth rate but she was always ahead of Britain and France. Russian industry showed particularly rapid growth rates in the 1890's and again shortly before the First World War (1909-1913). Each time within those cycles Russia doubled her gross industrial output and led the world in the rate of output growth.

In 1913 Russia ranked either fourth or fifth in world industrial production, having become equal with France overall and having outstripped her in a number of heavy industry sectors. Russia became an industrialised agrarian country with a medium level of development and joined the club of the

world great powers, thanks to the huge size of her territory, population, natural resources and economic and military potentials.

The industrial boom was made possible because Russia could make wide use of foreign capital and the organisational and technological experience of the more developed countries. New industries emerged taking the shape of large-scale machine production. Factories were fitted out with imported equipment which, if not the very best, was nevertheless quite up-to-date. Later on, industry was partly supplied with home-made equipment. The services of foreign experts were used to organise production and Western countries, which had a surplus of free capital, widely used the opportunities to make profitable investments in Russia.

Foreign capital was invested in the key sectors of the Russian economy, but this should not be taken to mean that Russian industry was a mere subsidiary of foreign companies. While in colonial and semi-colonial countries foreign capital was chiefly invested in the sectors engaged in mining and processing raw materials, in Russia, it was used to develop the key industries, adapting to the country's needs and closely cooperating with domestic capital. The bulk of investments came as state or government-guaranteed loans and was principally used to build railways. As for the direct foreign investments—they never exceeded one-third of the total joint-stock capital. Russia herself invested in her own colonies and in some of the less developed countries (China, Iran, Manchuria), although such investments were comparatively small.

The influence of foreign capital on the Russian economy was far from uniform. The total interest to be paid on foreign loans began to exceed the imported capital by the late 19th century. This situa-

tion resulted in a balance of payments crisis and higher taxes and led to an eventual sharpening of social conflicts. Last but not least, more and more of the external loans were used to bolster up the feudal and absolutist regime and became the main obstacle to the country's socio-economic and political progress.

In the early 20th century major changes typical of the already industrialised countries began to shape up in the structure of Russian industry, its technical equipment and its organisational forms. Since heavy industry was far ahead of light industry in output growth rate, the balance began to shift more and more in favour of the sectors manufacturing the means of production. Their share had increased from 30 to 40 per cent by the early 20th century, which was even slightly greater than in Germany or France. The growth of industrial output, particularly during the pre-war boom, was accompanied by important changes in the factories' equipment and technology, and an improvement in the organisation of production. Most of the new factories—which accounted for nearly half of the existing enterprises—were generally on a par with top-class foreign companies so far as equipment was concerned. One French author, noting this fact, even observed that "in 1913 Russia reached the level of Europe from the viewpoint of the equipment of industrial production."¹

The development of engineering and technology in Russia was also at a reasonably high level. The new types of ships, locomotives and engines introduced into production in the early 20th century were up to world standards at the time.

¹ R. de Bonand. *Les trois Empires asiatique: Russie—Chine—Japon*. Paris, 1913, p. 138.

Increasing concentration of production and capital led to the emergence of powerful monopoly associations in the Russian economy. Their influence was felt in every aspect of the country's life. Russia was among the world's leaders in the level of concentration of large-scale industrial production. Large factories, each employing over 500 workers, accounted for more than 70 per cent of total output and for about three-quarters of manpower as early as the late 19th century. In 1914 there were 1,400 workers per large factory in Russia, compared to 1,100 in the United States, and 900 in Germany.

Although Russia had fewer joint-stock companies and less stock capital than the advanced countries, she was ahead of many of them, in particular, Britain and Germany, in the average size of this capital. It was the high concentration of production and capital that gave rise to Employers' Associations which monopolised the manufacture and marketing of a number of key industrial products. Shortly before the First World War there were between 150 and 200 such large-scale monopolies in Russia. They covered the production of more than 80 types of industrial goods. Moreover, trust-type associations and concerns began to emerge, besides marketing monopolies, such as cartels and syndicates. The degree of monopolisation, especially in heavy industry, was extremely high. For example, monopoly associations in the coal and iron-and-steel industries accounted for up to three-quarters of total volume of production while the figure for transport machine-building was up to 100 per cent.

Banks played a major role in this process. Besides the State Bank with more than a hundred branches, in 1914 Russia had 53 commercial joint-stock banks with 778 branches, 1,108 city and 20 large mortgage banks, 36 city credit societies and more than a

hundred mutual credit societies. Commercial banks held the key positions in this sphere. They concentrated up to 70 per cent of all the deposits and current accounts and conducted active operations to finance industry, agriculture and trade. The five largest banks accounted for half of the resources and transactions of all the joint-stock banks. In 1913 they were represented in the governing boards of 248 major joint-stock companies. This was how the banking monopolies and financial industrial groups grew up.

Thus, the basic processes taking place in pre-revolutionary Russia were typical of other capitalist countries. Incidentally, the forms of monopoly associations, the level of monopolisation in the key sectors of the economy and the main trends in the development of financial capital were almost identical in Russia and the West.

However, Russia's achievements on the road of capitalist progress, impressive as they seemed at first sight, were nevertheless rather relative. Although the gap between Russia and the leading capitalist countries—the USA, Britain and Germany—in gross industrial output had been narrowed, it still remained considerable. Russia lagged behind even more in per capita industrial output, resembling in this respect such comparatively backward countries in those days as Spain, Italy, Japan, and Austro-Hungary.

Industrial progress itself was rather lop-sided and distorted. Most of the large industrial enterprises were located in five or six regions of European Russia. This territory accounted for over 75 per cent of the total industrial output and more than 80 per cent of the industrial work force. The remaining vast territories had only embryonic industry. Russian industry as a whole was never able to over-

come the technical and economic backwardness inherited from the feudal epoch which made it lag behind the West.

The numerous vestiges of feudalism in the country's rural areas were the greatest obstacle to the country's development. This should not be taken to mean that there had been no change in Russia's agriculture since 1861. A certain amount of progress was apparent. The land under cultivation had been expanded considerably, particularly in areas sown with industrial crops. Some of the landed estates were better equipped technically. Russia led the world in grain exports by 1914, accounting for about one-third of the total. But on the whole these successes were even more relative than those in industry.

The predominance of latifundia, the great landed estates, was the basis for the survival of the vestiges of feudalism, which were also backed by the system of estate management developed after the 1861 reform. Here we shall again have to look back at the past to understand why the agrarian problem was extremely acute in Russia.

Although the autocracy had sacrificed serfdom, it did its utmost to preserve the nobility's landed estates as fully as possible. The nobility retained the greater and better part of the land, forests, pastures and other facilities vital for successful farming. The peasants retained their farmsteads, cattle and working implements. They also received plots of land but the size and type of these made it impossible for the peasants to earn a decent livelihood. As a result, they were compelled to cultivate the landed estates either for cash or under a sharecropping arrangement. Most often, however, they had to work for a lease of arable or other land. Therefore the nobility, using the so-called work-off system, were



Petrograd. "Corner" tenants, as workers living in overcrowded houses in the town's slums were called. There were many shacks like this in the Russian countryside.

able to run their estates without investing any money in them.

To make the peasants more dependent on the nobility, the government took a number of steps to keep them in the rural areas and to slow down their stratification according to property status. These purposes were served by the preservation and strengthening of the medieval commune, with all its archaic attributes, equalising land ownership and tenure, periodic redivisions of the plots, the attachment of peasants to the plots, restrictions on their sale and purchase and the right of movement, mutual collective responsibility of the members of the commune and corporal punishment. All this not only blocked the economic initiative of both the peasants and landowners, but also led to bondage labour and stagnation in agricultural production. Farming methods were extremely backward and labour productivity very low.

But despite all these obstacles, capitalism forced its way both into the landed estates and the peasants' farms. The transient work-off system gradually developed into a capitalist one. Landowners began to use hired labour and their own implements on the estates. The amount of privately-owned peasant land began to increase and the communes started to break up into a rural bourgeoisie and proletariat. The landowners who failed to adapt to the new conditions went broke and were compelled to sell their estates.

This process, however, was extremely slow, particularly, in the country's central areas. Although the nobility had lost more than 40 per cent of their land by 1905, they continued to account for 62 per cent of all the privately-owned land. The shortage of land among the peasants became extremely acute since the plots they had received as a result of the

reform had been reduced by half as a result of the population growth. In the early 20th century the situation in rural areas became explosive. The essence of the conflict lay in the fact that while 28,000 rich landowners possessed 62 million hectares of land or more than 2,300 hectares each, more than 10 million peasant farms out of the total of 12.3 million had only 73 million hectares. With farming methods and technology prevalent at the time, it was necessary to have at least 15 hectares to ensure a subsistence minimum for an average peasant family. So it is clear that four-fifths of the peasants were on the brink of semi-starvation.

The defeat of the revolution in 1905-1907 delayed a radical solution of the agrarian problem but the government was again compelled to open the valve slightly to reduce social tension. The then Minister of Home Affairs, and later Prime Minister, P. A. Stolypin suggested a new course of agrarian policy. The idea was to put an end to the commune and make the land allotted to peasants their personal property. It was also proposed to make it easier for the more well-to-do peasants to buy land through the Peasant Bank—land which noblemen wished to sell for various reasons—and, finally, to resettle the land-poor peasants from central regions to outlying areas by providing them with land from the government fund. By this scheme the autocracy tried to solve the agrarian problem without affecting the foundations of the landed-estate system and putting their stakes in rural areas on the rich peasants.

Nothing, however, came out of this scheme. Between 1906 and 1915 a total of two and a half million farms left the communes with 17 million hectares of land or about 12 per cent of the allotments. A million new owners, chiefly poor peasants, sold their plots of land at once. Most peasants did

not want to quit the communes for fear that their position might become even worse. Nine and a half million hectares of land was sold through the Peasant Bank, constituting about 10 per cent of the total and a mere drop in the ocean of peasant poverty. The resettlement also failed to justify the hopes pinned on it. Most of the settlers never managed to get started in the new areas and either joined the ranks of the poor there or returned home completely broke.

From a purely economic point of view the reform somewhat speeded up the development of rural capitalism and led to a slight increase in farm production. However, the intensity of the old conflict in rural areas was not eased. Right up until 1917 the landed estates—those of the nobility and of the new owners—accounted for more than 70 per cent of the privately owned land in Russia. The land owned by the government, the monasteries and the Royal Family remained almost completely intact. New antagonisms were added to the old ones as the class struggle between the rural capitalists and the poorest sections of the peasantry sharply intensified. The government had hoped that the reform would ease social tensions in rural areas, but the result was just the opposite.

The policy of artificially preserving the vestiges of feudalism in the countryside influenced every sphere of the country's social life. In agriculture it resulted in the low level of production and efficiency and the peasantry was doomed to periodic crop failures and starvation. The last calamity of this kind before the war came with a crop failure in 1911, when various regions with a population of nearly 30 million suffered from hunger and an epidemic of typhoid. Although the yields of the principal crops had increased, agriculture failed to meet the needs

of both the growing population and industry which required more and more raw materials. The entire output growth was due to the development of new areas started up after serfdom had been abolished. In the central areas, dominated by the landed estates, crop yields in fact declined.

The low living standards of the peasants, who comprised three-quarters of the total population, narrowed the domestic market for both industry and agriculture and affected the wellbeing of the entire population.

In the social sphere the vestiges of feudalism slowed down the formation of classes typical of capitalist society. The land-poor peasants in bondage to the landowners could not find jobs in industry. A considerable number of peasants became paupers creating a hidden agrarian overpopulation. There were up to 30 million unemployed workers in the countryside in 1914. The surplus of cheap labour enabled industrialists to economise on factory equipment which slowed down technological progress. As a result, extensive, crude and extremely ruthless forms of worker exploitation became widespread.

Last but not least, in the political sphere, the remnants of the Middle Ages were conducive to the preservation of the essentially feudal political superstructure of Russian absolutism. Despite a number of reforms the autocracy was obliged to carry out, in the form of its political set-up, Russia, by the start of the First World War, was by far the most reactionary country in Europe.

Although tsarism took a step towards a bourgeois monarchy in the 1860s and 1870s it preserved all the attributes of feudal absolutism both *de facto* and *de jure*. In the Romanov dynasty, legends of the divine origin of tsarist power and its indivisibility were handed down from generation to gen-

eration. The last Russian monarch, Nicholas II, also pledged to maintain this tradition piously. The Manifesto on his Ascension to the Throne said that "it was from God that we received the power of Tsar over our people and it is before His See that we shall account for the destinies of the Russian Empire."

However, frightened by the scale of the First Russian Revolution, tsarism resorted to manoeuvring. Whilst in the social sphere the stakes were put on the rich peasants, in the political field representative bodies were introduced in an attempt to ease tensions. Those were the elected State Duma and the State Council, which was reorganised to make it partially elective. The two bodies received formal legislative powers and the set-up was similar to the Western-style two-chamber parliament. But this resemblance was purely superficial.

The monarch retained full power after the revolution, had the final say in the issue of any legislative acts and held unlimited executive power. Ministers were appointed by the tsar and were accountable only to him. And, as before, the law said that "the Emperor of All Russia shall possess supreme autocratic power. And it is the will of God to obey his power not only for fear but also in all conscience."

Elections to the top representative bodies were neither universal, nor direct, nor equal. Half of the members of the State Council were appointed by the tsar. The other half were elected by the clergy, the *Zemstvos* (local self-government bodies), societies of noblemen, employers' organisations, universities and the Academy of Sciences. Numerous sections of the population were barred from elections to the State Duma, including everyone under 25, women, students, servicemen, nomadic peoples, etc.

The election procedure was multistage. There was a two-stage system for the landowners and capitalists, a three-tier system for the workers and a four-tier system for the peasantry. Various classes chose different numbers of electors. In the final analysis the vote of one landowner was equal to two capitalists' votes, 260 workers' votes and 550 peasants' votes.

When, in the opinion of the tsar, the Duma became too unruly, the authorities never hesitated to dissolve it (as was the case with the first two Dumas in 1906 and 1907) and change the election law. The government's attitude to the "people's representatives" was vividly demonstrated by one of the last Premiers, V. Kokovtsev, who bluntly told one of the Duma sessions: "We have no parliament in this country, thank God!"

Nor did Russia have any basic democratic freedoms. Formally the Manifesto of October 17, 1905, wrested from the tsar by the revolution, granted a number of civil rights to Russian subjects. In reality, however, the Manifesto remained a scrap of paper. Arbitrary police rule reigned in the country.

Thus by the start of the First World War Russia was literally plagued by fierce antagonisms which tore her apart, antagonisms born both of the vestiges of feudalism and rapid capitalist development. The unresolved problems of a bourgeois-democratic revolution remained a top priority right up to February 1917, becoming increasingly acute. Yet it also became more and more apparent that even the victory of that revolution would not resolve the basic problems concerning the interests of the broadest mass of the people. Antagonisms linked with the country's entrance into the epoch of imperialism had gone too far, and the scope and intensity of social conflicts were too great to be resolved by a bourgeois revolution from above. Only a genuinely popu-

lar, socialist revolution could solve the country's problems in a radical way, and Russia did have the necessary minimum of material and technical prerequisites for that. These included large-scale machine production, a system of banking institutions, a reasonably ramified network of roads, and a comparatively developed machinery of accounting and distribution set up by the state and the monopolies. The social and political consolidation of various forces in Russia was also well under way. It left no doubt that it was both possible and inevitable for the bourgeois revolution to develop into a socialist one.

A Pyramid Ready to Collapse

The extremely acute deep-rooted conflicts typical of Russia in the early 20th century rose to the surface in the form of a mounting struggle among a very broad spectrum of social forces grouped into classes and political camps. What was the country's social structure before that stormy period in its history and what were its main components?

As in any capitalist country, society in Russia consisted of three principal classes: the bourgeoisie, the petty bourgeoisie and the proletariat. The reader should bear in mind, however, that those social strata which also exist in the modern world, looked somewhat different in the early 20th century. Important changes have taken place since then in the living standards, intellectual make-up and psychology of those classes. Thus people living in our times, who are used to such things as blue- and white-collar workers, farms equipped with all kinds of agricultural machinery, educated and efficient managers in big company offices, etc. find it hard to visualise Russia's social types at the dawn of this century. Nevertheless, the essence of the principal classes

in capitalist society has remained fundamentally the same. Hired workers continue to produce surplus value and big business and middle-class bourgeoisie continue to appropriate it while small holders are running their own farms or businesses based on their own labour.

The situation in Russia in the early 20th century was the same, the only difference being that the formation of the main classes of capitalist society had not yet been completed. The class boundaries were very "blurred" and the class divisions were complicated and confused by caste divisions. Besides the strata and groups typical of modern capitalist society, Russia up to 1917 retained gradations inherited from the feudal epoch such as the nobility, merchants, peasantry, etc.

In view of the insufficient in-depth development of capitalism, which gave rise to an abundance of transitional types, the social pyramid typical of capitalist society was in Russia more loosely connected than anywhere else. Its components were internally dissimilar and the whole of the social edifice could barely stand up under the pressure of inner struggles.

The base of the pyramid was made up of the proletariat, a class of hired workers deprived of the means of production who earned their living exclusively or chiefly by selling their labour. By 1914 the workers numbered 20 million (nearly 33 million together with their families), which was about one-third of the country's gainfully employed adult population. In this respect Russia was close to France, a little behind Germany, where workers accounted for about a half of the gainfully employed population, and far behind Britain and the United States where the proletariat made up two-thirds of the gainfully employed population. However, the gap is

narrower if we exclude the population of Russia's colonies.

The Russian proletariat was not uniform either in origin, national composition, education, skills, or financial status. This is not surprising. In every capitalist country the working class is surrounded by a host of transitional strata which are a source of its replenishment. In the conditions of Russia's economic boom this development was bound to assume and did indeed assume a particularly large scale. The number of workers in Russia had doubled during the two latest industrial booms alone.

Besides the working class families, the proletariat was also joined by artisans and craftsmen and, in particular, peasants who had gone broke. Some of the workers from rural areas retained their links with the land and their farms, in one way or another. Many had families or relatives in the countryside. All this served as a breeding ground for a private-ownership mentality and petty-bourgeois psychology among individual sections of workers, which hampered their organisation and the shaping of a class-oriented proletarian awareness.

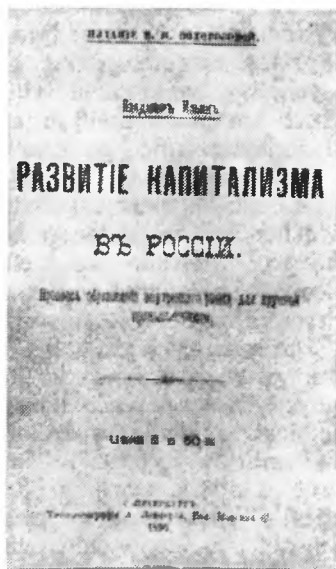
Paradoxically as it may seem, however, in Russia's conditions, social dialectics turned those negative factors into a source of additional influence by the proletariat on the mass of the peasants and a means of strengthening its leading role in the liberation movement.

The industrial proletariat occupied a special place among wage labourers. These were workers employed in large-scale industry, transport and communications and they numbered about four and a half million by 1917. This was the most mature stratum of the working class, both socially and politically. Most of them were skilled workers indispensable to large-scale industrial production. They



In his work "The Development of Capitalism in Russia" Lenin wrote: "The proletariat is, in the literal sense of the word, the vanguard of the whole mass of toilers and exploited."

V. I. Lenin, *Coll. Works*, Vol. 3, p. 584



came from working class stock, as it were, because already by the early 20th century half of those joining their ranks were from working class families. Over 90 per cent of the workers in the processing industry were permanently engaged at factories. Consequently, they were real, full-time workers and not half-workers and half-peasants as some Western Sovietologists are inclined to portray them.

Large-scale production, attracting workers from all parts of the country, united them, cemented their ranks and expanded their outlook. It demanded greater literacy and brought forth higher material and intellectual requirements. The overall level of literacy in Russia was extremely low. Little more than 20 per cent of the overall population could read and write by the early 20th century. However, among male workers nearly 60 per cent were literate, among working women, the figure was 35 per cent. By 1917, 80 per cent of male workers and more than 40 per cent of female workers were literate. The proletariat's ties with the land gradually became weaker. Significant here was the fact that nearly 60 per cent of all factories were situated outside cities. This was the result of government policy which for a long time was oriented to keeping peasants in rural areas by force. However, there was no stopping the march of life. Since peasants were not allowed to go to industry, industry itself moved closer to them.

The proletariat is the class which creates the most vital material values for society while also being the most exploited and denied the means of production. Its social position prompts it to fight for its emancipation. This fight was particularly bitter in Russia in view of the extremely harsh conditions in which the working class had to live. The work-

ing day had always been extremely long and the conditions of life and work were much worse than in the leading capitalist countries. Moreover, wages were several times lower.

True, the workers did gain certain improvements in their living conditions in the course of bitter struggles, in particular, as a result of the Revolution in 1905-1907. Working hours were reduced, wages were raised by almost 20 per cent, and insurance against disability and accidents was introduced in 1912. However, shortly before the First World War rising prices quickly swallowed up the pay rise. Overtime became widespread in view of the preparations for war, which brought back the long working day. The capitalists, having recovered from their fear of the revolution, also launched attacks on other workers' gains.

The position of workers was made even worse by the overall oppression of the working people which, under an autocratic regime, turned into a scandalous police tyranny and arbitrary rule. The authorities brutally persecuted the trade unions, formed in the years of the revolution, and the legal workers' press. A law enacted in 1905 abolished criminal prosecution for taking part in economic strikes, but in practice any strikes were still considered as crimes against the tsarist regime and as often as not were suppressed by armed force. The whole of Russia was shocked by a massacre of workers at the Lena gold-fields in Siberia, in 1912. Some members of the royal family were among the stockholders of this gold-mining company. The trouble started when troops were called in to fire on a peaceful demonstration of striking workers protesting against the sale of rotten meat by the management. More than 500 people were killed or wounded. In reply to public protests, the tsarist Minister of Home Affairs

A. Makarov said bluntly, "We have done that before and we shall continue to do so."

As a result, the proletariat faced two enemies: its immediate exploiters and the autocratic regime defending them and itself by the most brutal methods. In such circumstances any strike, even an economic one, inevitably assumed a political, revolutionary nature. Since the economic conditions were very harsh and were coupled with the absence of political and civil rights and since the privileged stratum of the working class aristocracy was very small (in Russia it accounted for not more than 4 per cent of the workers against 9 per cent in Germany and 15 per cent in Britain), this all paved the way for the development of a much higher revolutionary spirit among the Russian working class than among workers in other countries.

Foreign observers and researchers, either because they have only a superficial knowledge of Russian history or because they want to fit in with the theory, describing the October Revolution as a mere accident, are sometimes inclined to emphasise the "ignorance" of the Russian workers. They stress that their cultural standards were low and their professional organisation far from satisfactory. Indeed, the Russian proletariat was denied the opportunity of making full use of the benefits of civilisation which workers in other countries had come to take for granted, although their cultural backwardness is somewhat exaggerated. However, within a comparatively short space of time, Russian workers passed through a very good school of class struggle to finally test and adopt the key elements of revolutionary Marxist theory. The high concentration of workers at large factories aided their organisation and cohesion. As a result, a number of grass-roots workers' organisations emerged shortly before the 1917 Octo-

ber Revolution. The Russian workers were far ahead of the proletariat of any other country in their political maturity and experience of revolutionary struggles. In the last decade before the war they were already displaying hitherto unheard-of strike activity. According to incomplete official data, the number of strikers between 1905 and 1907 was over 4.7 million, while between 1912 and 1914 there were at least three million. The high level of the strikers' political activity was also amazing. In 1905 almost half of the strikers took industrial action for political motives. In 1907 this figure rose to 73 per cent and in 1912 it reached 80 per cent.

There are two objectively possible tendencies in the development of a working-class movement under capitalism: either to improve the workers' conditions within the existing system or enter into decisive battle against it. The second, revolutionary, tendency became irrevocably predominant in Russia. The Russian proletariat as a whole proved to be organically hostile to reformism and nationalism. Much of the credit for this went to Lenin's Party of Bolsheviks which held a leading position in the Russian working-class movement. This was the factor that enabled the working class to become the main revolutionary force in Russian society, to fight for democracy and socialism in the most consistent and steadfast manner and to lead other working and exploited people.

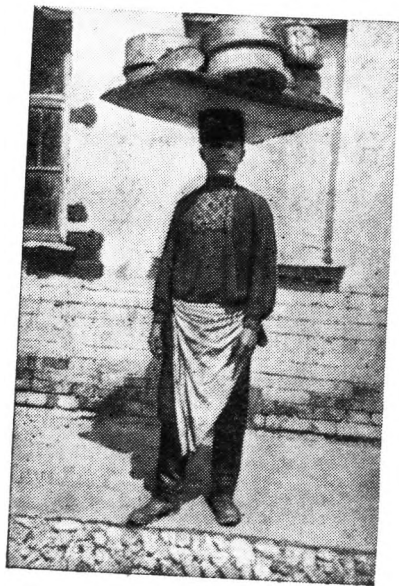
The middle part of the social pyramid in Russia was represented by a nearly 100-million-strong mass of petty bourgeoisie, accounting for about 60 per cent of the total population. The peasantry occupied a special place there both on account of its numbers (almost 85 million) and the role it played in the country's life.

The peasantry by origin was a feudal society class. However, by the eve of the revolution it had become far from homogeneous both in its property and social status. The poorest peasants made up approximately 65 per cent of all farmsteads. These were rural proletarians and semi-proletarians—hired labourers with their own small plots of land. They did some farming on their own but could no longer make ends meet without selling their labour. These people were the closest to the working class in status and, combined with it, accounted for more than half of the country's total population.

What is known as the "middle peasants" constituted an intermediate stratum in rural areas. Their distinguishing feature was that they could earn a living from their own plots of land. However, their position was extremely unstable. The Damocles' sword of ruin hung over them all the time, in particular, after the frequent crop failures in Russia. However, in better years they could even make a little surplus produce and the most enterprising of them joined the ranks of capitalist farmers or *kulaks*.

The numerically insignificant rural capitalists—about 15 per cent of all farms—accounted for more than half of the peasant-owned land and cattle and the vast majority of farm machinery and hired labourers. It was in fact a bourgeoisie, albeit peasant in nature. Most of them had little in common with free capitalist farmers both in their economic activities and social make-up. While exploiting the village poor, the *kulaks*, apart from purely capitalist methods, made wide use of bondage labour and usury, which were typical forms of early, medieval capitalism.

There was an acute shortage of land in view of the predominance of the feudal estates and, as the



The tsarist authorities
looked after the inter-
ests of the land-
owners.
An apple vender.

peasantry as a whole was never given full rights as a class, the landowners backed by the autocracy remained the chief enemy of the vast majority of the peasants. At the same time a struggle was already going on between the two opposing groups in the countryside. This struggle became especially acute and assumed a large scale during the years of the Stolypin reform. The sections of the rural population close to the proletariat in their status made up a clear majority. However, their political positions were extremely unstable, due to the peasants' dual social character. They were both workers and owners at the same time, so they were constantly wavering between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie.

The peasants needed political experience of their own to enable them to take a clear-cut stand and choose an ally in the struggle for land, civil and political rights and, so far as their proletarian and semi-proletarian sections were concerned, for reshaping society along socialist lines. A major role in this process of self-determination was played by the Stolypin reform. This reform showed that all hopes for solving the agrarian problem "from above" were doomed to failure. Further developments convinced the peasants that it was impossible for them to realise their aspirations even by means of a victorious bourgeois revolution. The October Socialist Revolution proved to be the only one capable of resolving the agrarian problem in a radical manner.

The non-proletarian, democratic sections of the urban population, though less numerous than the peasantry, nevertheless, made up a noticeable social stratum. These were the craftsmen, small traders, office employees, students and working intellectuals. They numbered about 14 million or 10 per cent of the total population by 1917. The craftsmen and traders, for the most part, were close to the "middle"

peasants in their social standing. However, they were in rather dire straits financially because their incomes were below even the earnings of skilled industrial workers. The office employees and intellectuals, except for the well-to-do upper sector, occupied a special place. Their economic situation brought them closer to the workers but their origin, way of life, and psychology drew them towards the bourgeois strata.

This duality led to the contradictory and inconsistent political stand of those sections of the population, and the proletariat and bourgeoisie continuously fought for influence over them. In the meantime, however, progressive-minded democratic intellectuals firmly linked their destinies with the Russian working-class and liberation movements.

Finally, the top of the pyramid was formed by the propertied classes numbering about 35 million or 20 per cent of the population. As capitalism had been advancing at a very fast rate and bourgeois society developed within a very short time in terms of history, those classes also constituted a very diversified conglomerate.

The trading and industrial bourgeoisie had long since captured the predominant positions in the economy. The main power of the class was wielded by an extremely small group of big capitalists personifying the merger of industrial and banking capital and making up the financial oligarchy. This group also included the richest members of the landed aristocracy and the new rich industrialists and bankers.

Not all of them kept abreast of the times and developed the necessary business qualities to meet the demands of the new era. Those who came from the families of government officials and technical intel-

ligentsia stood out noticeably in this respect, and naturally, they made up the most active part of the new capitalist élite. Although they had no capital of their own, they did have experience and connections in business and bureaucratic circles and enriched themselves quickly. A number of major businessmen of the most modern type arose from their midst.

However, the mass of the big and middle trading and industrial bourgeoisie was dominated by old merchant capitalists who retained the old caste prejudices and organisation to some extent, and also by those who came from peasant stock or were urban petty bourgeois with a clear prevalence of traders. And while, in the economic field, the Russian capitalists were inclined to use crude forms of exploitation, the distinguishing features of their political make-up were conservatism and extreme inertia.

These features stemmed from a number of factors, first of all, the very conditions in which the class of entrepreneurs formed in Russia. From its very beginning the bourgeoisie was heavily dependent on the autocratic regime which secured high profits for the capitalists by providing them with government contracts, subsidies and guarantees and protecting them from foreign competition by high customs tariffs. The capitalists also turned to the autocracy for protection from the mounting working-class movement. This situation led to the social "infantility" of the bourgeoisie and slowed down its consolidation as a class. For a long time members of the business community had to content themselves with being mere advisers invited by the tsarist government for consultations on various individual aspects of economic policy. Economic strategy was determined as before by the autocratic regime.

As it became more and more obvious that tsarism handicapped economic development and was unable to cope with the growing working-class movement, opposition among the bourgeoisie began to grow and they began to claim a share in running the country.

Much headway had been made in the class consolidation of the bourgeoisie and its political organisation by the start of the First World War. Russia had about 140 employers' organisations representing the business interests of separate industries and large industrial areas. Attempts had been made to set up an All-Russian Employers' Association. The total of such organisations exceeded 170 by early 1917 and their network covered all the key sectors of the economy and the country's industrial areas. The Russian bourgeoisie as a class had become more mature, which was evident from its striving to adopt a number of methods from the arsenal of the most modern, typically capitalist weapons in the fight to strengthen its domination. Among other things, this was reflected in the programmes of the political parties which mostly emerged in the years of the First Russian Revolution. All told, however, the contradiction between the growing economic power of the bourgeoisie and the preservation of full power by tsarism and the most reactionary sections of the landowners only deepened "the summit crisis."

The other ruling class was the nobility. Although the noblemen did lose a considerable part of their land after the 1861 Reform, they still constituted a very impressive economic and political force. True, in the early 20th century they ceased to be the only owners of big landed estates. Out of the 28,000 landowners' families, one-third was the so-called "up-start" gentry coming from merchant or peasant stock. Nevertheless, the value of the landed es-

tates still owned by the nobility exceeded the sum total of the country's joint-stock capital by 50 per cent.

Most of the landowners used backward farming methods. Productivity was low and so were the incomes from the estates. However, the landowners, especially the rich upper crust, took an active part in the trading and industrial businesses. They made huge profits from the sale, lease or mortgage of land. By 1916, mortgage money paid to the landowners since the end of the 19th century amounted to the astronomical figure for those days, of more than 32,000 million roubles, with unpaid debts running into 1,200 million roubles. That situation indicated that the interests of the landowners and capitalists were closely intertwined.

However, a relatively small amount of the money received was put to productive use by the landowners. The Russian aristocracy marked the last decade of its rule by a storm of revelry and extravagance which even outstripped the splendour and luxury of the 18th century. The rentier, parasitic incomes of the landowners had increased dramatically and this could not but affect the social make-up of the ruling class.

Some of the landowners who had gone the capitalist way joined the bourgeois camp by virtue of their political views. But the vast majority of them, especially, the noblemen owning large estates, while coming closer to the capitalists economically, never changed their class positions. From the socio-economic point of view, the estates of both the noblemen and the "upstart" landowners served as strongholds of the autocratic regime and the main obstacles to the country's progress. While constituting a clear minority among the upper propertied classes the noblemen owning large estates were

strong because of their links with the ruling dynasty—the first noblemen of the empire, the top officials of the state and the bureaucracy, as well as by their caste organisation and domination in the local government and self-government bodies.

Therefore, the contradictory, contrasting economy of pre-revolutionary Russia was paralleled by the no less intricate social structure. The tsarist autocracy described as "an Oriental colossus" by many contemporaries resembled an impressive medieval citadel with impregnable wall, high towers and deep basements in which the owners kept their powder. The slightest spark could blow the whole edifice to pieces. Russia, in the early 20th century, lived in anticipation of that explosion.

The Prisonhouse of Nations

National antagonisms figured prominently in the tangle of contradictions which tore apart Russian society. They further aggravated the overall situation, tense as it was, and imparted a particularly large scale and depth to the liberation movement.

The nationalities problem played a special role in Russia. In the West the states that had emerged as a result of the bourgeois revolutions were as a rule nationally homogeneous. In those states the nationalities problem had actually changed into a problem of colonies, and a feature of Western colonies was that they were situated far away from the colonial powers and were artificially separated from them by the colour bar. In Russia, as in Austro-Hungary, centralised states were formed before national consolidation had been completed. As a result, ethnically diverse, multinational states emerged in both countries. A considerable part of their populations was subjected to national oppression by

the ruling classes of the dominant nations. A specific feature of Russia also was that her vast colonies were directly adjacent to the parent state, and that the nationalities question was closely intertwined with the problem of colonies.

The Russian Empire was one of the world's largest. Its area was 22.4 million square kilometres, which made up one-sixth of the world's dry land and its population was over 170 million by 1914. The bulk of the population, more than 140 million, lived in European Russia while the country's Asian part accounted for just about 30 million.

Most of the areas inhabited by non-Russian nationalities lay along the perimeter of the Empire. In the West these were Finland, the Baltic Sea coast, Poland, Byelorussia, Lithuania, the Ukraine and Moldavia. In the South it was the Caucasus, itself a conglomerate of numerous ethnic groups. In the South-East it was Kazakhstan and Central Asia, and other national minorities occupied Siberia, the Far East and the North. In the centre of the country, between the middle reaches of the Volga river and the Ural Mountains, there was a vast region inhabited by many ethnic groups which did not constitute a compact majority.

The Russian Empire expanded its borders both by force of arms and diplomatic skills. The population of several areas entered the Empire voluntarily, either by the reunification of the nationalities of kindred origin which had temporarily fallen under foreign domination (the Ukrainians, Byelorussians and Lithuanians), or for considerations of national security, to escape enslavement or genocide (the Georgians, Armenians and Azerbaijanians). Other regions, such as Finland and Poland, joined the Russian Empire under international treaties. Still others were added to the Empire under diplomatic or mil-

itary pressure or as a result of conquest. Cases in point were Kazakhstan, Kirghizia, and the mountainous ethnic groups in the Caucasus. A considerable role in the acquisition of new territories was also played by the discoveries of the first travellers and the efforts of the traders and settlers who, for instance, developed the vast, sparsely populated plains in the South Siberia, and the Far East.

The full title of the Russian Emperor reflected the multi-national character of the Empire. It incorporated dozens of titles such as Emperor and Autocrat of All Russia, King of Poland, Kazan, Astrakhan and Siberia, the Grand Duke of Finland, Smolensk and Lithuania, to mention just a few.

The census taken in 1897 registered 146 languages and dialects used in the Empire, and none of its nationalities constituted an absolute majority. The Russians, considered the dominant nation, made up the majority of the population in the central parts of European Russia and Siberia and accounted for 43 per cent of the total. They were followed by the Ukrainians (17 per cent), Poles (6 per cent), Byelorussians (5 per cent), Jews (4 per cent), Kirghizes and Tatars (about 3 per cent each), Finns (about 2 per cent), and Germans, Latvians, Lithuanians, Bashkirs, Georgians, Armenians, Moldavians, Mordvinians, and Estonians (between 1 and 1.5 per cent each). The Russians, Ukrainians and Byelorussians made up a majority of about two-thirds. They had a common origin and history and their languages and cultures were also close.

The outlying areas inhabited by non-Russian nationalities differed in their political, cultural and religious situation. It greatly depended on the circumstances of their entry into the Russian Empire. In a number of cases, tsarism preserved their traditional institutions and laws, giving a measure of po-

litical, cultural and religious autonomy to the local people. Cases in point were Finland, Poland, Bukhara and Khiva. However, complete incorporation was the most frequent case. For example, the Ukrainian, Byelorussian and Lithuanian territories after joining the Empire even lost their former names. The same was also true of Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan and a number of other areas inhabited by non-Russian nationalities. And in most cases the administrative division failed to take into account the composition of the territories' population.

The Russian autocracy had always considered the Empire to be indivisible, single whole. It believed that one of the most important means of maintaining this unity was to Russify the outlying areas, to suppress the cultures of their nationalities, and to "level them off," as it were. Tsarism was quick to adopt the old imperial "divide-and-rule" principle in running a multilingual state. It not only infringed on the rights of the non-Russian peoples but also set them at loggerheads against each other, sowing hostility, mistrust and discord among them, and encouraging and often masterminding clashes between various nationalities, pogroms and massacres.

The great-power, chauvinistic ambitions of the autocracy reached their climax in the early 20th century. This was reflected first of all in sharply increased centralisation in home policy. It might seem that this trend was based on an objective factor: the growing economic ties among various regions, which met the needs of the country's overall economic growth. However, under an autocratic regime and in a police state, this policy inevitably became coercive and despotic and led to greater political, cultural and religious restrictions on the national minorities. Apart from this, rapid capitalist development had speeded up the formation of bourgeois nations.

The rapid growth of national awareness, for its part, made the oppressed peoples more sensitive to any forms of national discrimination.

The forms of national oppression and the protest against it varied, depending on the position that particular area occupied in the Empire's political system and the level of its socio-economic development. Some of them such as Finland, Poland, the Baltic territories, Byelorussia and the Ukraine, were not inferior to Russia's central parts in their economic development and were even sometimes ahead of them in several fields. These were not colonies in the economic sense but they were subjected to political and cultural oppression and religious restrictions. The forms of national oppression and its severity were also different. For instance, the status of Finland was determined by a treaty providing for a considerable measure of political autonomy (Finland had her own parliament, army, currency, and certain political and civil rights), which was a privileged position to some extent. German noblemen and urban small holders enjoyed a number of privileges in the Baltic territories, chiefly in the system of local self-government and the courts. There, tsarism sought to bring local conditions into line with those in the rest of Russia. National oppression in the Ukraine, Byelorussia and Lithuania was most vividly expressed in restrictions on the local languages and even persecution for employing them. As to Poland, it was renamed Vistula Territory and the autocracy sought to turn it into an ordinary outlying area of the Empire. Nearly all of Poland's old autonomy had been abolished in retaliation for the 1863 uprising.

However, the most severe national oppression was practised against the peoples in the Empire's outlying colonial areas. Russia was second in the world

in the size of her colonial domains (after Britain) and ranked third in their population (after Britain and France). In 1914 Russia had colonies with a total area of 17.4 million square kilometres and a population of 33.2 million. That was more than three-quarters of the country's territory and about one-fifth of its population. However, colonial oppression did not always coincide with national oppression.

The vast lowlands of the Ukraine, the Northern Caucasus and a large part of Siberia were examples of one kind of colony. As the density of the indigenous population was insignificant and there were vast expanses of uncultivated land, these areas became the object of colonisation. Most of the settlers were Russian, Ukrainian or Byelorussian peasants. In Siberia, for example, they accounted for 85 per cent of the population. These were farming areas with a clearly pronounced colonial economy. However, while subjected to the usual colonial oppression, they did not differ from the country's central areas in their national composition.

Another kind of colony was typified by the outlying areas of the Empire with a predominantly non-Russian indigenous population such as the Caucasus, Central Asia, Kazakhstan, the Far North, parts of

Over half of the population in Russia were subjected to national oppression.
A shepherd.



Siberia, the territories along the Volga River and the Ural Mountains. Even as recently as the beginning of the 20th century some of those peoples were still in the pre-capitalist and even pre-feudal stage of development. In those areas colonial oppression was combined with oppression on grounds of nationality. The methods of exploitation were semi-feudal and typical of early capitalism: land confiscation, taxation in kind, etc., coupled with outright robbery of the indigenous population by the colonial administration and the local aristocracy. Oppression on grounds of culture and nationality in those areas was aggravated by the fact that the working people had no political or civil rights whatsoever. Administrative tyranny by the tsarist authorities in those areas was indeed limitless. The colonies were ruled by the war ministry and there were practically no civilian courts. The overwhelming majority of the local people were illiterate.

As Russian capitalism developed "in breadth" and the railway network expanded, the country's outlying areas became drawn into Russia's overall economic system, turning into suppliers of raw materials for industry in the central areas. For example, Central Asia and the Transcaucasia became vital sources of cotton for the textile industry. Siberia and Kazakhstan turned into the major suppliers of cheap grain, meat, butter, leather and wool. Major mining and oil-extracting centres emerged in a number of areas. The city of Baku in Azerbaijan, for instance, became one of the world's major oil producing centres and the copper and manganese ore-fields in Armenia and Georgia and the gold-fields in Siberia assumed major economic importance. In the early 20th century the outlying colonial areas accounted for about 45 per cent of the total output and about a quarter of the workers employed in the mining

industry. Manufacturing industries also developed, although more slowly. All told, the picture which emerged was typical of the relations between colonies and the metropolitan country.

However, the fact that the colonies and the metropolitan country within the Russian Empire were adjacent to each other, introduced specific features into the oppression of the outlying non-Russian areas. The role played by this factor in their lives was far from simple or uniform. The combination of national and colonial oppression aggravated the dire plight of the local people, and the plunderous policy of tsarism and the big capitalists slowed down their development. Nevertheless, entry into Russia played an objectively positive role for a number of non-Russian nationalities, in particular, those with lower levels of development. Slavery and the power of the sultans and khans were abolished. Ownership of land by the local feudal lords and tribal chiefs as well as the clergy was restricted. The cultures of various nationalities began to penetrate and enrich one another. All those factors helped draw those peoples into Russia's capitalist system, with all the consequences which that entailed such as a more rapid social, economic and cultural development and the emergence of a capitalist social structure. However, by far the most important result was the participation of the working people of those areas in the great liberation struggle of the Russian people. Thus national liberation movements merged with the mainstream of the all-Russia revolutionary struggle against tsarism.

The solution of the nationalities and colonial problems largely depended on the class approach. Although various nationalities occupied different positions and differed in the levels of their development, and despite the fact that the consolidation of

their forces was both difficult and complicated, multilingual Russia did not turn into a Babel. Two different approaches to the solution of those problems had crystallised.

On the one hand, the local capitalists and aristocracy, despite all their opposition and even hostility to tsarism, gravitated in the long run towards an alliance with the Russian ruling classes. As a rule, their demands never went beyond petitions for cultural and national autonomy within the Russian Empire. This approach to the problem, which actually denied the nations the right to self-determination, made it impossible to settle the nationalities and colonial issues in Russia on the initiative of the bourgeoisie or under its leadership.

On the other hand, the mass of the working people in the non-Russian areas gravitated towards an alliance with the Russian workers and peasants by virtue of the profound community of their social interests. This was perfectly natural. Tsarist oppression, no matter how cruel and barbaric it might be towards the non-Russian peoples, was on the whole equally harsh for the working people throughout the Russian Empire. All were equal in their lack of rights and although the Russians were officially considered the ruling nation, they actually had no more privileges than the other nationalities. They too were denied access to the treasures of their own culture. Although Russia had given the world such great writers as Leo Tolstoi, Anton Chekhov, Fyodor Dostoyevsky and Maxim Gorky, most Russians were illiterate. In the early 20th century Russia held 22nd place in Europe in the number of students per hundred population and 15th place in per capita spending on education. And if we say that Russia was a prisonhouse of nations, then the great Russian people were by far its most outstand-

ing inmates. This is why the ideas of great Russian chauvinism, zealously spread by the tsarist authorities, eventually proved alien to the broad mass of the people. The nationalist propaganda spread around by the local bourgeoisie and the aristocracy in the non-Russian areas also failed. Agrarian relations and capitalist exploitation in the non-Russian areas were basically the same as those in central Russia, and this factor played a significant role.

Thus, in Russia, socio-economic and class problems prevailed over the nationalities issue. The latter was of subordinate, derivative importance in the social struggle and its settlement depended on the solution of the main problems.

Consequently, the Russian proletariat consisted of many nationalities and its struggle was internationalist by nature. The revolutionary Marxists adopted a consistently democratic stand in their approach to solving the nationalities problem. As a result, it was the working class and not the bourgeoisie that led the democratic movement in Russia for national equality and the complete freedom of every people to decide its own future.

II. THE SEETHING BOILER: THE "SUMMIT" AND THE LOWER CLASSES

The Ruling Camp

Since the outstanding problems of the bourgeois democratic revolution and the ripening socialist revolution were closely intertwined, there was a specific correlation of conflicting forces on the political scene. The bourgeois revolutions in the 18th and 19th centuries were typified by confrontation between the two main camps, the defenders of the old regime and those bent on destroying it. But in Russia in the early 20th century there were three conflicting political camps—the government circles, the liberal bourgeois elements and the revolutionary democratic forces led by the proletariat.

The supporters of the old, obsolescent regime made up the government camp of the autocratic monarchy. Although its position was being eroded, tsarism still constituted an impressive force. Its tenacity was largely due to the fact that, besides the huge government-owned lands inherited from the feudal epoch, the autocracy made wide use of the state capitalist sector to bolster up its economic positions. This included dozens of state-owned factories, more than two-thirds of the railways, the ramified credit network of the State Bank, etc. It had the whole might of the state machinery at its disposal: a tremendous system of bureaucracy and po-

lice (in the early 20th century Russia had 385,000 officials and over 100,000 policemen and gendarmes), and a nearly one-and-a-half-million-strong army commanded by 40,000 officers of noble stock. There were also 200,000 clergymen to brainwash the mass of the people, day in and day out, into believing that the tsar was the father of the nation, equally fair both to the poor and the rich, and to preach blind obedience to the powers that be.

The nobility constituted tsarism's social base. It had retained its key positions in the state machinery, the army, and local self-government bodies. Big business interests, fostered by government contracts, also supported the autocracy because it secured immense profits for the capitalists and its army protected them from any manifestations of workers' discontent. And for a long time the tsarist government had cynically exploited the patriarchal, monarchic illusions of the mass of the people, especially the peasants.

Last but not least, at the most critical moments when tsarism found itself on the brink of financial bankruptcy, it was the Western capitalists who came to its rescue. For example, when the revolution of 1905-1907 was at its peak, French bankers made an almost thousand-million-rouble loan to the tsarist government, which considerably improved its situation.

However, tsarism's overall position became more and more shaky. After 1905 the ground began to slip from under its feet and the autocracy had to resort to Bonapartist manoeuvring. The peasantry's illusions about the tsars started to disperse, and the government put its stakes on the rich farmers, the *kulaks*. The bourgeois opposition, playing on the danger of a revolution, demanded a share in running the country, and tsarism tried to cover up its abso-

lutism with the fig leaf of parliamentary rule. The government, by manipulating the election law, secured an acceptable composition of the Duma and tried to cement an alliance of the capitalists and landowners in it. The autocratic regime hoped that it would be able to solve the objective problems of the revolution from above as the "Iron Chancellor" Bismarck had done in Prussia.

The initiator of the new government policy, P. A. Stolypin, emphasised that reforms were both necessary and inevitable because a direct fight against the revolution could at best remove its effects but not its cause.

The policy proposed by Stolypin demanded that the autocracy make yet another step towards bourgeois monarchy while retaining the main prerogatives of tsarist power. The land reform was supposed to ease class antagonisms in rural areas and destroy or reduce to a minimum the principal contradiction of life in Russia, that between medieval landownership and backward farming and most modern industrial and financial capitalism. However, the main hope was pinned on the rich peasants, the *kulaks*, as a new social mainstay of the autocracy. By introducing a minimum of liberal bourgeois reforms in the political sphere the government also hoped to strengthen its position, believing, with good reason, that counter-revolutionary bourgeois liberalism was both limited and inconsistent.

However, it very soon became clear that the Stolypin land reform had failed to live up to expectations and that the legitimist reactionary elements amongst the landowners refused to make any concessions to the bourgeois opposition. In fact, a Right-wing opposition emerged and reactionary landowners came out against the government plans providing for a certain modernisation of local admini-

nistrative and self-government bodies, and the judiciary. They regarded such reforms as attempts to reduce their own prestige and influence.

The supporters of the autocracy, having been exposed to the threat of a revolution, sought salvation in organising their forces. A number of extremely Right-wing parties and organisations of monarchically-minded landowners came into being, including the Council of the United Nobility, the Russian Monarchist Party, the Russian Assembly, and the "Nationalist" Party. Although there were minor differences in some of the points of their programmes, all of them were agreed on one thing: the need to preserve an unlimited autocracy, a "united and indivisible" Russia, feudal landownership and the privileges of the nobility.

The Council of the United Nobility acted as the ideological and coordinating centre of all the Right-wing parties. It emerged in 1906 to bring together the 37 provincial societies of noblemen which had made up the backbone of the nobility's caste corporation since the end of the 18th century. The leading body of the organisation, the Standing Council, included the richest and most influential landowners, generally with an extreme Right-wing political orientation. The social and political make-up of that wing of the landowner reactionary forces was personified by the first President of the Council, Count A. A. Bobrinsky, who belonged to one of the richest, most aristocratic families of noblemen. The owner of huge landed estates and sugar refineries, Count Bobrinsky had long since won the reputation of a diehard reactionary. His successors as Presidents were similar reactionary figures such as A. P. Strukov and D. F. Samarin. Each of them owned between 60 and 70 thousand hectares of land.

The very fact that the Council of the United Nobility was an organisation of the ruling classes and represented the "top Russian estate" gave it a particular weight and influence in the political spheres. This influence was all the greater because many of its members held important government posts and had extensive connections with the royal court, the State Council and the Duma. Count Bobrinsky is a case in point. At different times he was a member of the State Duma and the State Council, Deputy Minister of Home Affairs and Minister of Agriculture, President of the Council of the Anglo-Russian Bank and had a high court rank as well. The President of the Standing Council officially had the right to report directly to the tsar and in fact, many other leading figures of the organisation, who held high court ranks, also had free access to the Emperor.

The Right-wingers in the State Council and the Duma formed factions which acted like political parties. At the beginning the Right-wingers opposed any representative bodies but they quickly realised that the Duma could be used successfully to set out their views and to pressure the government. The aristocracy focussed its political activities on the State Council. Incidentally, the State Council never passed a single bill which might infringe even slightly on the landowners' interests.

As for the Duma, where certain speech-making abilities were required, the Right-wingers had their own "heroes" there. Their leader was N. E. Markov, a landowner in Kursk Province, well-known for his reactionary and obscurantist views. He used to say proudly that the only thing more to the right than himself was the wall of the conference hall. His stentorian bass alternated with the shrill tenor of his associate V. M. Purishkevich, "the most Rus-

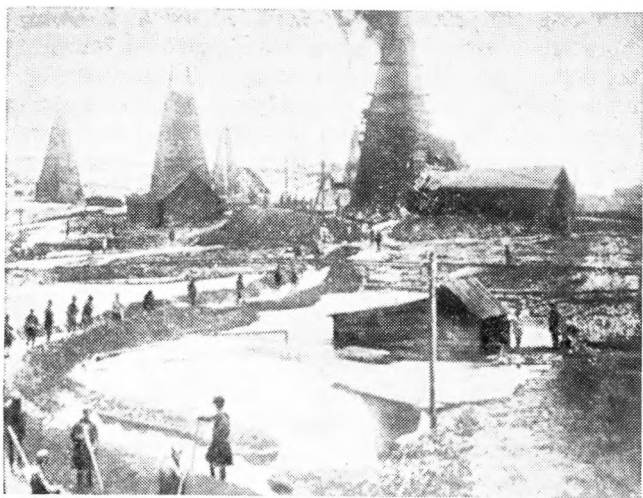
sian" of all noblemen, who owned vast landed estates in Bessarabia and used to serve with the Ministry of Home Affairs.

Both Right-wingers became notorious for their hysterical and, sometimes, hooliganistic outrages against members of the Duma's Left wing, the liberals and even government ministers whom they accused of being "soft." In one of his speeches Purishkevich stated bluntly that the Right-wingers regarded the Stolypin government, which was seeking to introduce what was described as a constitutional system, as their political opponent. One fully appreciates the significance of this statement when one takes into account the fact that all the ministers had been appointed by the tsar himself.

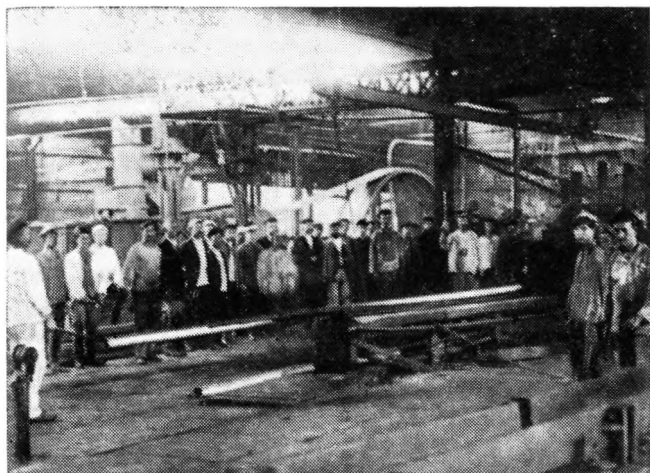
Markov's and Purishkevich's notoriety was not confined to their scandalous invectives in the Duma. Both of them joined forces with Doctor A. I. Dubrovin, a character with a very shady past, in initiating the formation of such extremely Right-wing and chauvinistic groups as the Union of the Russian People and the League of Michael the Archangel. Those organisations called themselves "Black Hundreds" (the name of the tsar's special bodyguard units in olden times) and their aim was to fight against the revolutionary movement and to rally the broadest sections of Russian society under the banner of the monarchy. In so doing they sought to revitalise the tsarist illusions of the most ignorant and backward sections of the population in town and the countryside. For the sake of popular appeal they included in their programmes a number of provisions similar to those of some of the Left parties and specially intended to win over the support of "the lower classes." As an example, peasants were promised assistance in buying government-owned land on favourable terms. The Right-wingers also

advocated shorter working hours, government insurance schemes, better labour organisation, etc.

Nicholas II himself took a very favourable view of the Black Hundreds, and carried the badge of a member of the Union of the Russian People. These organisations were financed from secret government funds but they never managed to build a broad, grass-roots base for the regime of the autocratic monarchy. The fight against the revolution was proclaimed to be their main objective. Some of their local branches engineered a series of Jewish pogroms and assassinations of prominent revolutionaries and liberal politicians. They even master-minded assassinations of some high-ranking government officials who appeared to be too liberal for



Late nineteenth century. The Baku oil industry was owned by the English oilman, Rothschild.



An iron-and-steel plant in the Urals.

them. In fact, there is reason to believe that the Black Hundreds had a hand in the assassination of P. A. Stolypin in 1911. They prepared some of their actions with the knowledge of the police and even with its cooperation. According to the former Premier S. J. Witte, it was hard to draw a line between the agents of the secret police, the security department and the members of the so-called Union of the Russian People.

The Black Hundred unions recruited their main strike force from among the petty bourgeoisie and the simply déclassé elements. From time to time their leaders tried to create a semblance of broad popular support for their organisations by master-minding "mass" protests through their local branches against various liberalistic hesitations of the government or, on the other hand, sending messages

of greetings to the tsar on every "firm" step he had taken.

Another attempt to create a grass-roots base for the landowner parties was the setting up of the All-Russian Union of Landholders. The idea was to draw well-to-do peasants into it. However, the Union died a quiet death after five years of existence only to emerge on the political scene once again in 1917—with the same measure of success.

After the Right-wing parties had accomplished their mission of mobilising counter-revolutionary forces in the turbulent years of the First Russian Revolution and rebuffed all attempts to liberalise the regime to any appreciable degree, towards the eve of the First World War they scaled down their activity.

"His Majesty's Opposition"

When the leader of the Constitutional-Democratic Party P. N. Milyukov was speaking at a reception given by the Lord Mayor of London in the summer of 1909, he stressed that the Russian opposition would remain an opposition of, and not to, His Majesty. The sentence became a catch-phrase. A slight change of grammar but what a radical alteration in the very meaning of the word "opposition." It is no longer a group of redoubtable accusers of the existing system making the tsar and his ministers tremble in their shoes, but a bunch of well-wishing critics of the "extremities" of the autocratic regime, dreaming of modernising it step by step under the "classical" British pattern. During the existence of Russian liberalism its relations with "historical power," as the liberals described the tsarist regime, were constantly changing. The liberals now turned "pink" and even went "red" under

the impact of the revolutionary upsurge, then again turned coat and repented of their oppositional passions. However, on the whole, Milyukov's catchphrase aptly summed up their political stance.

It so happened in the course of history that the liberal ideology, which was bourgeois by nature, and the capitalist class had coexisted in Russia for a long time without noticing each other. Liberal ideas had emerged as far back as the second half of the 18th century under Catherine II. For more than a century they were entertained by progressive intellectuals from noble stock who reacted particularly sharply to the autocratic tyranny. As for the merchants, factory owners, bankers and other members of the business community, until 1905 they had feared like the plague the very word "liberalism" and remained loyal subjects to their Crowned Sovereign. Thus in Russia in the second part of the last century the liberal movement was concentrated in the *zemstvos*—the local self-government bodies—which emerged in most of the provinces of Central Russia in 1864. The leading role in these was played by landowning noblemen while democratically-minded intellectuals (rural doctors, teachers, agronomists, statisticians) prevailed among the office employees.

Despite its timidity and inconsistency the liberal movement reflected the interests of the country's capitalist development. Although it opposed the most outrageous vestiges of serfdom, it never encroached upon either the monarchy or the landed estates. The liberals expressed only a moderate desire to expand the rights of the *zemstvos* to "crown the edifice" of local self-government bodies with a national consultative, representative body.

At the turn of the century the liberal movement remained a rather shapeless conglomerate of various

trends. The liberals tried to find organisational forms for the opposition movement, drew up programmes and tried to broaden their social base by enlisting the support of the working classes. Russian liberalism as a whole in the early 20th century drifted towards bourgeois constitutionalism, yet at that time the liberals failed to become a social force of major importance or to set up a political party of their own in the true sense of the word.

When the 1905 Revolution began, the Russian liberals radicalised their programme considerably and stepped up their oppositional activity against the autocracy. The most Left-wing of the liberal organisations, the League of Emancipation, adopted a programme in March 1905 promising not only democratic freedoms to the people, but also a number of social reforms. These included an 8-hour working day and the allotment of additional land to the land-poor peasants from government and private landed estates by compulsion with compensation payment. However, the turbulent popular actions, especially the powerful upsurge in the working-class movement, quickly sobered up even the most hot-headed liberals. Popular pressure compelled the tsar to sign a manifesto, on October 17, 1905, promising political freedoms and a legislative State Duma. This marked the turn of the liberal camp from conditional semi-recognition of, and semi-sympathy for, the revolution in the spring and summer of 1905 to its open rejection and condemnation of revolutionary parties. While in the West it took the liberals several decades to undergo such a change, in Russia it occurred within just a few months, demonstrating the tremendous force of the popular revolution of workers and peasants. But it also showed that Russian liberalism was stillborn. The liberals strongly denounced the armed uprising in Moscow

in December 1905 describing it as "madness" and "absurdity," and a horrendous, incorrigible mistake by the workers and the Bolshevik Party. Thus the liberals clearly demonstrated their turnabout in ideological support for counter-revolutionary actions and their justification, and also the rejection of the ideals of democracy and people's freedom, although they had claimed previously that their main objective was to serve these ideals.

The liberal forces finally crystallised into political parties in October and November 1905, forming the Constitutional-Democratic Party (the Cadets for short) and the Union of October 17th (the Octobrists), incorporating the Left Centrist and Right-wing elements of the liberal movement respectively. The Cadets attracted prominent bourgeois intellectuals, liberal-minded landowners and some office employees. At the beginning they had a following among some of the urban petty bourgeoisie and even among small groups of workers and peasants. The latter, however, very soon became disenchanted with the Cadets. On the other hand, after the 1905-1907 Revolution had been suppressed, the Cadets began to develop contacts with the big monopoly bourgeoisie. The prevalent influence among the Octobrists, however, was the rich landowners who reshaped their estates along capitalist lines, and also the upper sectors of the trading and industrial bourgeoisie. Octobrist influence on the broad democratic sections of society was negligible.

The Cadets' relations with the ruling "summit," the business community and the democratic camp were rather complicated. In the beginning, tsarism, frightened by the revolution, tried to tame the Cadets and even negotiated the Liberal participation in the government with them (October 1905 and June 1906). However, the Cadets' flirtations with

the people, and, more important, their quickly revealed lack of ability to bridge the gap between the autocracy and landowners on the one hand and the mass of the working people on the other, put an end to all that. The government, having recovered from the 1905 upheavals, ceased to reckon with the "People's Freedom Party," as the Cadets had begun to call themselves, and tolerated them only because the Cadets did not encroach on the foundations of the Establishment. As the Cadets' programme contained many elements of social demagoguery, to the trading and industrial bourgeoisie it looked rather "red" and divorced from reality. Thus, although the Cadets successfully acted as the main ideologists of the Russian liberal bourgeoisie and truly reflected its main, strategic interests, they failed to enjoy the support of the powers that be. As for the broad mass of the people, the Cadets had always been alien to them in spirit as a party of "masters." The Cadets failed to gain a following either among the workers and peasants or among the main groups of

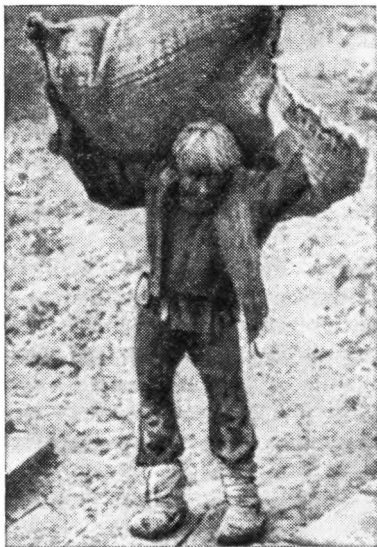


the working intellectuals. While in 1906 when the Cadets' organisation was at its peak, they had many thousands of members, later on they were close to complete disintegration and paralysis, especially, in provincial cities.

Since they failed to enlist support either from the people or the business community, the Cadets never became a strong opposition party. Significantly, as the revolutionary tide of 1905 subsided, the Cadets' opposition began to fade out. In early 1906 they stated bluntly that Russia should remain a constitutional monarchy. In 1907 they actually abandoned their demand for a government responsible to the State Duma and curtailed their land reform bill. At a critical moment they refused to back the working-class members of the Second Duma who

"As capital grew bigger it increased its pressure on the workers, turning them into paupers, compelling them to devote all their time to the factory, and forcing the workers' wives and children to go to work."

V. I. Lenin, *Coll. Works*, Vol. 2, p. 101



were accused by the tsarist authorities, without any foundations whatsoever, of preparing a coup. During the years of Stolypin's reactionary rule the Cadets chose the role of a "responsible opposition" (unlike the "irresponsible opposition" of the revolutionary parties) and even gave up working out their own legislative bills, preferring simply to propose various amendments to the government bills.

Shortly before the First World War, as a new upsurge of the revolutionary movement swept the country, the Cadets again swung somewhat to the left and in 1913 even dared to vote against allocations to the Ministry of Home Affairs, whose basic aim was to fight the enemies of the autocracy. However, even at that time, the Cadets could not bring themselves to break off with the government. In their search for the non-existent "third side" of the barricades, the Cadets tried to dissociate themselves both from the reactionary camp and the revolutionaries. At best they found it possible to act "parallel" with the revolutionary forces. In practice this meant making use of the results gained by the struggles of the workers and peasants for their own political wheeling and dealing to share power with the rotten tsarist regime. Such actions in no way supported the people's struggle for freedom.

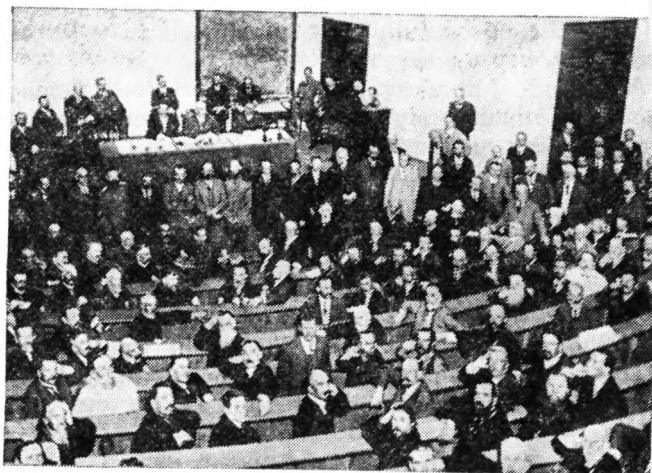
The acknowledged leader of the Cadets was P. N. Milyukov. He had been Chairman of the Party Central Committee for many years and editor of its principal newspaper *Rech* (Speech). He also played a key role in the Cadet faction in the State Duma where on many occasions he spoke on vital political issues. Milyukov was a former Assistant Professor at Moscow University in the chair of Russian history, and the author of a number of major scholastic works, including *Essays on the History of Russian Culture*, which came out in several edi-

tions. In 1905 he fully devoted himself to political activities.

Although Milyukov was an experienced demagogue and had a truly "Byzantine" character not alien to hypocrisy and intrigue, he undoubtedly also had some principles of his own. For instance, he firmly believed in the advantages of the evolutionary, reformist way of social development over a revolutionary one. He considered the monarchy to be the vital pivot of Russia's entire political system and invariably professed great-power nationalism. Milyukov was also firmly convinced that it was impossible to suppress ideas with bayonets and put an end to the revolution by the old police methods alone. He rather sought to oppose revolutionary ideology, especially Marxism, by an elaborate system of his own views. He maintained that what Russia needed was firm capitalist law and order, the unshakeable right of private ownership and European culture, not a revolution or socialism. However, history showed that in revolutionary Russia, such an alternative to Marxism was doomed to failure from the very beginning.

For years Milyukov's main political rival in the Cadets' Central Committee had been V. A. Maklakov, a leading lawyer, a member of three State Dumas and, by an irony of fate, the brother of a high-ranking tsarist bureaucrat. He was a typical moderate liberal. It was said that while he was a student, Maklakov attended a concert, and standing behind a column, chanted "Marseillaise! Marseillaise!" and then squatted down in a cowardly manner so that his superiors could not see him. The Republican French anthem was officially banned in Russia in those years.

Among the Cadet leaders were the Dolgorukov brothers who came from an old princely family,



Sitting of the State Duma.

Prince D. I. Shakhovsky, a well-known figure of the *Zemstvos* (local self-government bodies), I. I. Petrunkevich and the lawyer M. M. Vinaver. One remarkable figure among the Cadets was Pyotr Struve. He started out politically as a "legal Marxist" and even wrote the founding manifesto of the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party. Later, however, he made an almost complete aboutface to lead the Right wing in the Cadet Party.

As for the Octobrists, their motto was to preserve a "united and indivisible" Russian Empire and a strong monarchy. As bourgeois reformists, they campaigned for granting all civil rights to the peasantry, supported Stolypin's land reform and recognised freedom of trade unions and economic strikes, although with some reservations. During the period of reaction, the Octobrists acted as a pendulum in the Duma, now swinging towards the

Black Hundreds, now towards the Cadets. They made it possible for the tsarist government to pass bills which were either downright reactionary or masked with a flavour of liberalism in keeping with the spirit of the times.

In view of the general heightening of political tension in Russia in pre-war years, the Octobrist camp broke up. The Left-wing and Right-wing elements abandoned it and the remainder formed a faction of the Octobrists of the *Zemstvos*. They took a more leftist stand than before, although they continued to support the government on all matters of principle.

The most prominent figure among the Octobrists was A. I. Guchkov. He came from a dynasty of Muscovite textile factory owners and financiers. A rabid nationalist, he was a man of resolute and even somewhat adventuristic character. Guchkov was an extremely wilful person, blindly following his unbridled instincts. One of his contemporaries aptly described him as a virtuoso of intrigue and a genius of unscrupulousness. He began his military career as a volunteer in Central Asia. During the Boer War he went to Africa and, later, to the Far East. He was dismissed from the army, over a scandalous affair, with the rank of Captain. Nevertheless, Guchkov regarded himself as a major expert on all military matters and was quite popular among the officers. In the State Duma he chaired the Defence Committee and had access to many military secrets. In 1910 and 1911 he was President of the Third Duma and between 1915 and 1917 he chaired the Central War Industries Committee. He joined the first Provisional Government in March 1917 as War and Navy Minister.

Lenin brilliantly showed up the true essence of the Octobrists by observing that "the typical Octob-

rist is not a bourgeois intellectual, but a big bourgeois. He is not the ideologist of bourgeois society, he is its real master. Being directly interested in capitalist exploitation, he has a contempt for all theories, despises the intelligentsia, and, unlike the Cadets, repudiates all claims to 'democracy.' He is a bourgeois businessman."¹

In 1912 industrialists in Russia's central region, principally in Moscow, took the initiative in setting up another bourgeois party. It was called the Progressive Party, or the Progressists for short. The idea was to form a party of big businessmen free from any outside influences. The Progressists expressed the interests of the big capitalists more frankly and straightforwardly than the Octobrists. They resented the strong landowner influence in the Union of October 17th because it hampered their efforts to work consistently to implement the main provisions of the October 17th Manifesto. The Progressists wanted a strong government to secure new markets for Russian industry, first of all, in the Near and Middle East. They called for a vigorous fight against foreign capital domination in the Russian economy, a government responsible to the Duma, and wider powers to the Duma and local self-government bodies.

¹ V. I. Lenin. *Coll. Works*, Vol. 11, p. 229.



Enchanting fairies
swathed in roses de-
lighted the bourgeoi-
sie,

The Progressists believed that the chief instrument of putting pressure on the government would be the bloc of bourgeois and landowner parties in the Duma. Such a bloc, by threatening to kill the government's budget bill, could make the government agree to reforms. In their political gamble the Progressists were prepared to use even the Left parties, including the Bolsheviks, also regarding them as a lever on the autocracy.

The most outstanding figure in the Progressive Party was A. I. Konovalov, the President of a big Moscow textile company with a capital of seven million roubles. He was a typical educated and enterprising capitalist of the "new generation." Significantly, after the February Revolution he became Minister of Trade and Industry and Deputy Prime Minister in the Provisional Government.

Another prominent personality in the Party was P. P. Ryabushinsky, one of eight brothers from a well-known family of Russian industrialists and bankers, originating from rich peasant stock. The Ryabushinskys owned a string of factories in light and heavy industry, began to build a motor works, one of the first in Russia, played a major role in many enterprising bourgeois organisations and published a well-known newspaper called *Utro Rossii* (The Morning of Russia). P. P. Ryabushinsky be-

who were protected by the bayonets of the tsarist troops. Workers were fired on during a peaceful demonstration outside the Winter Palace on January 9, 1905.



came the acknowledged leader of the Russian counter-revolutionary bourgeoisie shortly before the October Revolution.

The facts show therefore that we have no reason to underestimate the strength and organisation of the Russian bourgeoisie. It had numerous representative organisations, political parties, and clever and sufficiently experienced politicians. However, in view of its objective position in the country's social structure and its constant dependence on tsarism the Russian bourgeoisie was both unable and unwilling to become either a revolutionary or a consistently oppositional force. It was torn asunder by internal contradictions and practised the most primitive and crude methods of exploitation. It also lacked the necessary experience in the political corruption of the working class and social manoeuvring. All this eventually resulted in the weakness of the Russian bourgeoisie as tsarism's potential successor at the helm of the ship of state. So after the autocracy had been overthrown, Russia took quite a different path. She entrusted her future to the party that led the camp of the proletarian and peasant democracy, the Bolsheviks, and not to the bourgeois politicians.

Proletarian and Peasant Revolutionary Democracy

The proletariat was the most progressive class of Russian society, so it was only logical that it became the first class to set up its political vanguard, as far back as 1898—the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party (RSDLP). In the late 19th century Marxist theory was known only to a very narrow circle of democratic intellectuals and advanced workers. Initially the spontaneous working-class move-

ment, protesting against capitalist oppression, existed parallel with Marxism as it were. However, scientific socialism started to merge with the working-class movement in Russia as early as the mid-1890's. It was a very rapid and extremely promising development and much of the credit was due to the League of Struggle for the Emancipation of the Working Class, set up by the young Russian Marxist V. I. Ulyanov (Lenin) in St. Petersburg in 1895. Similar organisations emerged in other Russian cities and they paved the way for a Russian social-democratic party based on the theory of revolutionary Marxism.

However, the working-class party had no programme of its own right up to the summer of 1903. Nor did it have the necessary ideological unity or cohesion. The social-democratic organisations were small and isolated. They had neither enough people nor enough funds for party work. It was also necessary to overcome the disbelief of some of the Social Democrats in the revolutionary potentialities of the working class, and their striving to limit the working-class movement to the purely economic tasks of improving the wellbeing of the proletariat. It was the Marxist newspaper *Iskra* (The Spark) published abroad, that helped overcome organisational disorder and ideological vacillations within the ranks of young Russian Social Democracy.

This newspaper was founded by Lenin. He went abroad in 1900 after four years in prison and internal exile in connection with the case of St. Petersburg's League of Struggle for the Emancipation of the Working Class. While abroad, Lenin accomplished a tremendous amount of work to rally all the genuinely revolutionary forces in Russia's working-class movement. Among those who worked with Lenin on *Iskra's* editorial board were other promi-

nent Marxists, in particular, G. V. Plekhanov. *Iskra* initiated and organised the Second Congress of the RSDLP in the summer of 1903 which marked the beginning of a new stage in the development of the working-class and social-democratic movement in Russia.

At the Congress there was a split between the firm *Iskra* supporters, that is, the consistent revolutionary Marxists, who followed Lenin, and various vacillating, opportunistic elements, who seriously departed from Marxism on many theoretical and practical issues. Lenin's followers received a majority of votes in the election to the party central bodies and from that time onwards they were called Bolsheviks (from the Russian *bolshinstvo*—the majority). They never pressed for a split of the party organisations. On the contrary, they sought comradesly teamwork among all the Social Democrats provided all the party members obey the will of the majority. However, their opponents who came to be known as Mensheviks (from the Russian *men-shinstvo*—the minority), launched an active campaign to disorganise and break up the existing party bodies, resorting to quite impermissible methods from the point of view of party ethics. As a result, Russian Social Democracy broke up into two parallel parties, the Bolsheviks and Mensheviks, who attempted unsuccessfully to reunite between 1906 and 1911 and became completely separated from each other in 1912.

The emergence of the Bolshevik Party (now the Communist Party of the Soviet Union) in 1903 was a landmark not only for the Russian but also for the world working-class movement. Unlike the parties of the Second International, which were extremely amorphous organisationally and suffered from ideological discord, and which increasingly oriented

themselves to an exclusively peaceful, parliamentary way of fighting for socialism, the Leninist Bolsheviks became a consolidated, strictly centralised organisation of fighters who shared the same views and who were prepared to go through any trials and even to die for the sake of the revolution and the communist ideals.

In Russia the Bolshevik organisations worked underground and, inevitably, in great secrecy. They



Some leading members of the Petersburg "League of Struggle for the Emancipation of the Working Class". Lenin—front row, second from right.

selected their members carefully and strictly obeyed party discipline. The First Programme of the Bolshevik Party adopted at the Second Congress of the RSDLP underlined that the aim of the working class was a socialist revolution, the dictatorship of the proletariat and building a socialist society. At the same time the party's top priority task was to fight for the overthrow of the autocratic regime and introduce complete democracy for the entire country. That included the establishment of a democratic republic, the introduction of civil liberties, universal suffrage, complete equality of all nationalities and recognition of their right to decide on their own future independently, including their secession from Russia. The Programme also demanded an 8-hour working day, freedom to strike, to organise in trade unions, social insurance and improvements in the workers' living and working conditions.

The Bolsheviks also paid much attention to destroying all the vestiges of serfdom in agriculture. They invariably regarded the peasants as the closest friends and allies of the working class in the fight against the autocracy, which is why they first demanded that the land taken away from the peasants by force after the 1861 reform should be returned to them. In 1905 another clause was added to the Programme which called for turning over to the working peasants all the land owned by the nobility, the church, the government and the Royal family without any compensation. And in 1906 Lenin proposed a programme of nationalising all the land as the best way of eliminating all the vestiges of the Middle Ages and creating conditions for the unimpeded development of peasant farming without the nobility's landed estates.

This shows that the Bolshevik programme for the immediate future was not aimed at eliminating cap-

italism. Rather, its intention was to clear away all the obstacles for its development. In this respect the Russian Marxists were guided to a certain extent by the path of industrial and agricultural development in the United States in the late 18th and early 19th centuries. At the same time the Bolsheviks never lost sight of the socialist future of the working-class movement. They were far from willing to put off the proletarian revolution in Russia till doomsday only because the country was still behind the leading Western capitalist powers in her economic development. On the contrary, the Bolsheviks were firmly convinced that the leading role of the working class in the fight to free Russia from the bondage of the autocracy would, following the victory over tsarism, clear the way to the further progress of the revolution and its changeover to a new stage, that of fighting for socialism. The Bolsheviks believed that the bourgeois-democratic revolution in Russia could gradually develop into a socialist one since the country possessed the objective material prerequisites for beginning socialist construction. Other vital conditions for this were a firm alliance between the working class, the poor peasants and the semi-proletarian sections of the urban population and the support of the international proletariat. In fact, in 1915, Lenin reached a very important conclusion when he said that the proletarian revolution could first be victorious in one country where imperialist contradictions were particularly acute and where the working class and its Marxist party had acquired more strength than anywhere else for the vigorous fight against the bourgeoisie. By 1917 Russia had become such a country.

The Bolsheviks were guided by Marxist theory developed and enriched by Lenin who adapted it to the conditions of the early 20th century. They led

the struggle of the Russian proletariat first of all during the 1905-1907 Revolution, then later in the 1917 February Revolution which put an end to the tsarist autocracy and, finally, in the Great October Socialist Revolution.

One of the strongest points of Bolshevism, which favourably distinguishes it from the other socialist parties of those days, was the unity of theory and practice. The Bolsheviks never had that fatal gap between word and deed which was typical of the Second International. They led the strike actions of the working class and stirred it up to an armed uprising against the autocratic regime. They carried out a good deal of political education work in town and the countryside and were very active in the trade unions founded during the First Russian Revolution. They also skilfully used the State Duma for revolutionary purposes and were always in the forefront of the class struggle and in the midst of the mass of the people. They were the only consistently revolutionary party in Russia to offer the people a constructive programme to renovate the country and solve all the extremely acute and painful problems of life.

One could meet Bolsheviks in the working-class districts on the outskirts of the cities, in out-of-the-way villages, college and university auditoriums and tsarist army barracks. The party was indissolubly linked with the people. Its supreme goal and principal task was to fight for the radiant future of the broadest "lower" classes. The Bolsheviks drew their strength from their ties with the people, first of all, the working class and from the working class came the most courageous, seasoned and conscious fighters for the revolutionary cause. By 1905 industrial workers already accounted for about 60 per cent of the members of Bolshevik organisations. The

finest representatives of the democratic intelligentsia, working peasants, and people from the urban middle class also joined the Bolsheviks. And although before the October Revolution the Bolshevik Party was not particularly large, the monolithic unity of its ranks and the utter self-sacrifice of every member turned the Party of Communists founded by Lenin into the most dangerous political adversary of tsarism and the bourgeoisie.

The Bolshevik Party was Lenin's brainchild in the full sense of the word. Lenin was a genius of revolutionary thought, a brilliant organiser and outstanding speaker and journalist. A nobleman by birth, he dedicated himself from the age of 17 to the revolutionary movement and the struggle for the emancipation of the working class from exploitation and oppression. His whole life was devoted to the struggle for the triumph of the communist ideals and for the happiness of the common people. Lenin can be put on a par with the greatest revolutionaries of the past. However, he was immeasurably above them because he attained the summits of Marxism, the most advanced social theory of our time, and founded the revolutionary Marxist party of the working class, a genuinely remarkable instrument of radical social changes.

Lenin was the only one to fully understand the radical change in the world's economic, social and political development that occurred at the turn of the century and to evaluate its consequences and the new prospects it opened up to the working class. When Lenin joined the revolutionary movement, revolutionary Marxism, vulgarised by the revisionists of the Second International, gained a powerful source of ideas. The proletarian party acquired an organiser and leader of a talent and moral force greater than had been known in history until then.

Outwardly, Lenin in no way resembled a super-man leader. He was of medium height, stockily built, with a big Socratean forehead, slightly screwed-up eyes and a small fawn-coloured beard. His most characteristic feature was his simplicity free from any affectation or showing-off, and this held tremendous appeal for the working people. Significantly, workers used to say about Lenin with deep respect and affection: "He is our man." These few words contained the highest praise and recognition, which are so vital for any political leader who has devoted his life to serving the working people. Lenin owed his position as a leader exclusively to his intellect, which fused immense encyclopaedic knowledge, crystal-clear logic and rare intuition. To this day Lenin's literary heritage amazes us by its inspired thoughts and the brilliancy of its refined dialectics, passion and optimism. Lenin's power lay in the fact that he could see farther, understand more deeply and quickly and express his thoughts in a more lucid, clear-cut manner than others. Lenin knew how to tell the people about extremely complicated things without any theatrical gestures or artificial pathos but in plain, clear language. Any audience, captivated and charmed by that deep and simple wisdom, listened to the leader of the revolution with bated breath, deriving not only a programme of action from his words but also the profound confidence that this was the only programme that could lead to victory.

The strength of the Bolsheviks lay in the fact that the party had other remarkable leaders working side by side with Lenin and under his direct guidance. They had passed through the crucible of the three Russian revolutions. After the victory of the October Revolution they managed to ensure leadership of every sphere of life in the world's first so-

cialist state. Among those leaders were workers and peasants coming from all the main nationalities inhabiting Russia: Russians, Ukrainians, Jews, Armenians, Georgians, and Latvians, to mention just a few.

Not everyone with whom Lenin embarked on the road of the October Revolution remained loyal to his ideas and plans. Some of his former associates fell by the wayside at the sharp turns of history or even became political opponents. But this fact makes the heroic exploit of Lenin and those who reached the great objective together with him even more impressive.

The Bolshevik Party expressed the interests of the working class and the rest of the working people more fully and exactly than anybody else. The Bolsheviks rightly became the leaders of the working class and their manifold and self-sacrificing activities for the good of the people became the highest embodiment of the leading role of the working class in the struggle to free Russia from the oppression of autocratic despotism and capitalist exploitation. Their actions were indispensable in enabling the working class to carry out its historic mission of leader in the revolutionary struggle.

Bolshevism's main ideological opponents in the working-class movement were the Mensheviks. They were an opportunistic group including radically-minded petty-bourgeois intellectuals and some of the industrial workers. The latter, as a rule, were the highly skilled and well-paid sector of the working people. The Mensheviks had a following in St. Petersburg, Moscow, Odessa, Rostov-on-Don, Russia's western areas, the Donets coal-fields, the Transcaucasia, and several other regions. Significantly, however, by 1914 only about one-fifth of the politically-conscious workers were supporting

the Mensheviks, while the Bolsheviks were backed by the vast majority of the working class.

Although both the Bolsheviks and Mensheviks were formally guided by the same Marxist programme, they existed as two independent parties from the very outset, with their own organisational centres, publications and strategic and tactical doctrines. The Bolsheviks and Mensheviks were also engaged in an acute ideological struggle on all the key issues of national politics.

If we ignore for the moment the constant vacillations typical of Menshevism as a political trend, its doctrine can be summed up as follows. They denied that a socialist revolution was possible in the foreseeable future in a country like Russia which they regarded as totally backward. As a result, they pinned their hopes on the country's free development along capitalist lines as a bourgeois parliamentary republic. They believed this would be a long process and, in their view, in the course of this process the objective and subjective prerequisites for a transition to socialism would develop in a matter of several decades.

The Mensheviks linked the elimination of the vestiges of feudalism and the reshaping of the country along democratic lines with a bourgeois revolution of the "classical" West-European pattern of the 17-19th centuries. While paying lip service to working-class leadership in the revolutionary movement, the Mensheviks considered that role to be only temporary and, more important, forced upon it by circumstances. They maintained that this stemmed from the weakness of the bourgeoisie and not from the strength of the proletariat. Thus they looked forward to the emergence of a strong bourgeois party in Russia (the Cadets were the closest to their ideal) which would rightfully lead the libe-

ration movement against the autocracy. As for the peasantry, the Mensheviks clearly underestimated its role in the revolution, emphasising the peasants' political ignorance and small-holder prejudices.

The Mensheviks attached great importance to the legal forms of the working-class movement, especially, economic strikes. They opposed preparations for an armed uprising, put their stakes on such working-class organisations as trade unions and co-operatives, and praised in every way the role of the State Duma as the centre of national political life.

[Menshevism was characterised by an inclination towards political compromises, the worship of spontaneous mass movements, and the playing down of the role of the proletarian party. They regarded the latter (which was the beginning of their differences with the Bolsheviks at the Second Congress



The uprising in Moscow in December marked the peak of the 1905 Revolution. Barricades on the Arbat.

of the RSDLP in 1903) as an amorphous conglomerate of various cells and groups not bound by any strict discipline or ideological unity. In their view, such groups should include not only convinced revolutionaries but also all hangers-on and those sympathetic to the revolution. Thus the Mensheviks sought to turn the working class into an appendage of the liberal bourgeois movement. They limited the scope of the proletarian struggle and dampened its fervour and thereby eventually slowed down the revolutionary process, whether they wanted to or not.

These characteristics of the Mensheviks became particularly pronounced after the defeat of the 1905-1907 Revolution, when the Right-wing Mensheviks renounced both the revolutionary struggle and the underground revolutionary party of the working class itself, earning for themselves the name of Liquidators. These renegades rejected the dictatorship of the proletariat and the alliance with the peasantry and preached refined nationalism. Some of the Mensheviks took a conciliatory stand on the Liquidators' policies and only a small group of the so-called party-minded Mensheviks, together with the Bolsheviks, wanted to preserve the underground party organisations and remained loyal to social-democratic traditions.

A special role among the Mensheviks was played by the Trotskyites who combined so-called ultra-revolutionary tendencies with a number of typically Menshevik strategic principles. For example, they denied the role of the peasantry as an ally of the working class, were very pessimistic about the internal prerequisites for a proletarian revolution and pinned their hopes exclusively on assistance from the international working class, etc. However,

Trotsky's¹ ideas had never been widespread in Russia's working-class movement.

The most outstanding and contradictory personality in the Menshevik camp was G. V. Plekhanov often described in the West as "father of Russian Marxism." A nobleman owning a small estate in Tambov Province, he began his revolutionary career in the 1870s as a Narodnik with anarchist views. However, by the early 1880s he became convinced that neither the theory nor the practice of *Narodism*² held any prospects and instead adopted Marxist views. Plekhanov became an active populariser of Marxism and a prominent Marxist theoretician. He had a vivid personality and strong will, combining brilliant erudition, a talent for polemics and journalistic skills with profound and sincere loyalty to the working class. Plekhanov was particularly talented as a Marxist philosopher. However, he also possessed character traits such as exorbitant false pride and dictatorial ways which became even more pronounced during the 37 years he spent as an emigré when he was cut off from the everyday practice of the Russian proletariat's revolutionary struggle. As a result, Plekhanov became gradually de-

¹ L. D. Trotsky (Bronstein) (1879-1940) joined the social-democratic movement in 1897. He was a Menshevik and later took a Centrist position. He was admitted to the Bolshevik Party in the summer of 1917 and was a member of the Party CC Politbureau between 1917 and 1926. On more than one occasion he opposed the party line for which he was severely criticised by Lenin. In 1927 he was expelled from the party and sent into exile.

² *Narodism* was the ideology and movement of the non-gentry intellectuals prevailing at the bourgeois democratic stage of the liberation struggle in Russia (1861-1895). The *Narodniks* considered the peasantry the main revolutionary force. They denied the proletariat's decisive role in the revolutionary struggle and also believed that history was made by "heroes" blindly followed by the "masses."

graded as a political figure and a leader of revolutionary Social Democracy. Dogmatism and an inclination to scholasticism became more and more apparent in his thinking. Although he actively cooperated with Lenin in the early 20th century, in late 1903 he joined the Mensheviks. But he occupied a somewhat special position in their ranks, actively fought the Liquidators and sometimes even supported the Bolsheviks. However, in his principal views, Plekhanov invariably gravitated towards Menshevism, which became manifest during the First World War and, in particular, in 1917, when he rejected the October Revolution.

The acknowledged leader of the Mensheviks was Y.O. Tserdobaum known under his literary pseudonym of L. Martov. He came from a merchant family and joined the social-democratic movement in his early youth. Martov was undoubtedly a talented journalist although he lacked depth and was extremely biased in his judgement. Martov always brought a touch of hysteria, malice and personal enmity towards Lenin into his polemics with the Bolsheviks.

The members of the Bund, the General Jewish Workers' Union of Lithuania, Poland and Russia, were also very close to the Mensheviks. The Bund emerged in 1897 and later joined the RSDLP. Its members preached nationalism and separatism in the working-class movement and adhered to opportunistic positions.

The Party of Socialist-Revolutionaries formed in late 1901 and early 1902, laid claim to the ideological and political leadership of the peasant movement. The Socialist-Revolutionaries (SRs) maintained that they were the successors to the revolutionary *Narodniks* of 1870s. The *Narodniks* were the first to try to stir up peasants to a fight against tsarism

but were unsuccessful. Later they engaged in terrorist activities against high-ranking tsarist officials and in 1881 they assassinated Tsar Alexander II.

The Socialist-Revolutionaries idealised in every way the working peasantry. In this category they included all peasants who farmed their land without using hired labour. They claimed that the peasantry was the repository of socialist ideals. In their view, the working peasants, workers and democratically-minded intellectuals constituted a single whole, "the people," and they participated in the revolution in its name.

As the Socialist-Revolutionaries eclectically combined the obsolete ideas of *Narodism* with fragments of Marxism, they mistakenly regarded the peasant movement against the landowners, which was essentially bourgeois, as a struggle for socialism. Hence their confusing slogan of "socialising" the land. This combined the revolutionary idea of expropriating the landed estates with the Utopian scheme of preserving the old peasant commune, regarded by the Socialist-Revolutionaries as almost the embryo of a future socialist society. In practical terms the "socialisation" preached by the Socialist-Revolutionaries differed little from the nationalisation of the land, but they gave a pseudo-socialist colouring to this purely bourgeois reform thereby adding to the confusion in the peasants' minds. Nevertheless, in a democratic revolution such a programme was in line with the moods of the broad mass of the peasants and secured a degree of popularity for the Socialist-Revolutionaries in rural areas.

The Socialist-Revolutionary political programme called for a democratic republic and political liberties and was close to the demands of the RSDLP in many respects. Socialist-Revolutionaries' tactics

were based on individual terrorism. Their militants killed two Ministers of Home Affairs, a Grand Duke, and many members of the top tsarist administration and generals. Undoubtedly, the terrorist acts did help disrupt the government machinery but such acts by themselves could not change the country's political regime. There was also the other side of the coin. Terrorist acts triggered off government reprisals and diverted revolutionary forces from their work among the mass of the people.

Socialist-Revolutionary organisations were rather active in rural areas and among city workers, students, soldiers and seamen. Despite their adventurism and frequent vacillations, the Socialist-Revolutionaries were basically a democratic revolutionary party in the early 20th century and fought against the autocracy, so the Bolsheviks found it possible to conclude temporary combat agreements with them, in particular, during armed actions against the existing regime. A case in point was the armed uprising in December 1905. At the same time, however, the Bolsheviks were engaged in sharp polemics with the Socialist-Revolutionaries on the theory and practice of the revolutionary struggle.

The outstanding figures among the Socialist-Revolutionary leaders were Victor Chernov, their main theoretician and party journalist, and Boris Savinkov, head of the combat organisation. In 1906, all Russia was talking about 22-year-old Maria Spiridonova. After an attempt on the life of a high-ranking tsarist official who ruthlessly suppressed a peasant uprising in Tambov Province, she was raped by drunken officers and sent to a hard labour camp in Siberia where she stayed till February 1917. Later she became one of the leaders of the Left-wing Socialist-Revolutionaries. Another figure to achieve notoriety was E. Azef, who was a member of the

Central Committee of the Party of Socialist-Revolutionaries and a police informant at the same time. The exposure of Azef's provocative activities in 1908 led to a sharp fall in the prestige of the Socialist-Revolutionary Party in the people's eyes, especially, among the democratically-minded intellectuals.

During the 1905-1907 Revolution the peasant deputies in the State Duma set up the independent *Trudovik* Group, which was an unsuccessful attempt to found a separate peasant political party. The *Trudoviks* were particularly prominent in 1906, when after the tsar had dissolved the First Duma, they appealed to the mass of the peasants to take up arms. Later the *Trudoviks* took a more moderate stand and scaled down their political activity considerably.

Besides the Socialist-Revolutionaries and *Trudoviks*, there were also the Popular Socialists who engaged in political work among the peasants, and broke away from the Socialist-Revolutionaries in 1906. Similar activities were conducted by a number of organisations in areas inhabited by non-Russian nationalities. However, they had no grass-roots support in the countryside and their influence on the peasants was no match for the influence of the Bolsheviks on the politically-conscious urban proletariat.

Thus, during the early 20th century, Russia resembled a giant seething boiler which, as compared with the times of Marquis de Custine, had long since been in a state bordering on explosion. The first flare-up occurred in 1905, and the second blast was brought nearer by the First World War which broke out on August 1, 1914.

III. THE FIRST WORLD WAR

Economic Ruin

The First World War was one of the greatest calamities in mankind's history. It eventually involved 30 states with a population of more than one and a half thousand million, nearly nine-tenths of the world's total. Over 70 million men were called up for the armies of the belligerent powers. Ten million of these were killed and more than 20 million were wounded or crippled. Such was the tremendous price the people had to pay for the bloody adventure of their governments which unleashed a war aimed at redividing the world.

Preparations for the war started long before it broke out. Two military-political blocs had emerged in Europe—the Triple Alliance and Entente. Military budgets grew from year to year, and countries built up their stocks of armaments and ammunition. Russia grew more and more dependent on Britain and France, both financially and economically. Russo-German contradictions, on the other hand, became more acute. What is more, tsarism did not have enough strength to carry out its expansionist schemes on its own. This logically brought the tsarist autocracy into the camp of the Entente. However, of all the great powers Russia was the least of all prepared for the serious trials of war, both militarily and economically.

War—for some, a chance to be charitable, for others, the grief of parting,



In the long run, that was the reason for the setbacks of the tsarist army. By the autumn of 1915 the tsarist forces had to abandon Galicia, Poland, part of Byelorussia and provinces on the Baltic Sea coast. Germany and Austro-Hungary paid for the success with the lives of two million of their soldiers, but the Russian Army was even in a more difficult position. It lost about 3.5 million men who



were either killed, wounded or taken prisoner and was almost put out of action. Errors committed by the tsarist generals and other high-ranking officers and the absence of effective assistance from the allies were also partly to blame for those defeats.

A catastrophic shortage of artillery and rifles, to say nothing of ammunition, became apparent in the Russian army as early as the end of 1914. Troop reinforcements were sent to the front practically unarmed.

Meanwhile, an overall economic crisis was growing countrywide and threatened to paralyse the whole of the national economy. Following the example of other belligerent powers, Russia attempted to regulate the operation of the economy and transport along state-capitalist lines. A string of special commissions on defence matters was set up involving representatives of the government and the bourgeoisie. Numerous war industries committees also came into being. However, those measures could not stop the inevitable deepening of the crisis. As a result of the call-up, agriculture lost nearly half of its able-bodied men and newcomers accounted for nearly one-third of the work force in industry.

More than 1,600 factories had ceased production



for others, destruction

by the spring of 1916 and about 1,500 had cut down their volume of output. The war had a disastrous effect on the national economy not only because industrial enterprises were physically destroyed but because industry and agriculture had been switched over to the totally non-productive sphere—servicing the army and the navy. According to some estimates the war was consuming up to 50 per cent of the national income by 1917.

In a number of industries, which were working for the army in the field, output went up by some 200 or 300 per cent during the war. However, in industry as a whole, output growth in terms of value in 1916 was only 21.5 per cent as compared with the 1913 level, and in 1917 production fell by almost 25 per cent. There was a particularly sharp decline in the output of oil, steel, pig iron and textiles.

The shadow of bankruptcy loomed large over the country. During the 30 months of the war, military allocations totalled about 30,000 million roubles which was three times the amount of usual government spending for such a period. To cover the deficit, the government raised taxes and issued bonds on internal loans to a sum of 7,500 million



and death.

roubles. External loans totalled 6,600 million roubles. The country was flooded with paper money. The national debt exceeded 40,000 million roubles by the spring of 1917 and interest payments alone amounted to something like 2,000 million roubles a year. In 1917, Russia outstripped all the great belligerent powers, except Britain, in the size of her national debt.

Transport was also a shambles. The number of worn-out locomotives and cars was growing steadily. The amount of cargo the railways failed to deliver ran into scores of thousands of wagon-loads. In February 1917 the railways carried less than half the food rations needed by the army in the field. In early March 1917 there were times when the supplies of bread in Moscow and Petrograd would last for just a few days while at several sectors of the front, with hundreds of thousands of soldiers to be fed, they would last for just half a day.

The impoverished countryside, which had lost about five million horses, cut down its grain output by about a quarter as compared with pre-war times. The output of butter and meat had also dropped. And although in the countryside, especially in the eastern regions, there was the necessary minimum of food, chaos in transport and the plunderous activities and black-marketeering of the bourgeoisie and landowners put the nation on the brink of famine. By 1917 the price of bread had nearly doubled, that of meat had more than trebled, cotton had gone up nearly five times and the price of shoes had risen nine times. Food riots and attacks on foodshops were increasing in number with every passing month. The situation in the country was becoming catastrophic.

The Agony of the Tsarist Regime

Any war places special, enhanced requirements on the nations involved in it and on the governments which unleashed it. This was all the more true of a war of such a scope as the 1914-1918 worldwide conflict. And the autocratic regime, which for a long time had been engaged not so much in governing Russia as in fighting its own people, showed within a short space of time, its utter inability to cope with the problems facing it. To direct a 15-million-strong army, the sophisticated government machinery and a huge bureaucratic system it was necessary to possess knowledge, statesmanship and organisational talent. But all that was lacking in the degenerate, outdated landowner class headed by the "first nobleman," the last Russian tsar. It was all beyond the capabilities of the utterly corrupt, senile tsarist regime, the entire political philosophy of which—if there was any "philosophy" to speak of—was to keep intact the age-old foundations of the autocracy and to retain all the power, riches and privileges at any cost.

Historians and journalists have already found quite a few vivid and colourful comparisons to convey the atmosphere of the political, intellectual and moral crisis in the ruling "summit" of Russian society in wartime. They have written about the "eclipse of Imperial Russia," comparing Nicholas II to a crazy driver, speeding his car to the edge of an abyss. The war made the contradictions tearing the country apart even more ugly and unbearable, and brought class antagonisms to boiling point. Indeed, it is hard to imagine more striking contrasts than those which could be observed in Russia during those days: the trenches running for thousands of kilometres in which hungry, under-

clothed and sometimes even unarmed soldiers waited for death amidst blood and mud, and the resplendent palace rooms smelling of incense, the intrigues and depravity, where the horrible breath of the war was not even felt; poor Russian villages, drowned in snow and half empty of inhabitants, and the luxurious halls of the restaurants of the capital where a bottle of champagne cost more than an average worker could earn in a month of hard, back-breaking labour.

The crisis of power made itself felt at all levels: officials in the upper administrative echelons failed to adopt timely and politically justified decisions, while those in the lower echelons were unable to carry them out precisely and quickly. The entire government machinery was plagued by corruption and parochialism, bureaucratic procrastination and official incompetence. The government had neither a well-thought-out strategy nor reasonable and flexible tactics. The government was in a state of senile decay prior to its inevitable and imminent downfall.

After the summer of 1915 when the army suffered major defeats at the front and when revolutionary and oppositional sentiments in the country had begun to grow, there came what was labelled as "ministerial leap-frogging"—frequent government reshuffles accompanied by quick and unexpected replacements of high-ranking officials. The autocracy resorted to such tactics to gain at least a semblance of political stability. Nicholas II, compelled to strike a balance between the extreme Right-wing legitimists and the opposition in the Duma, had begun to change his ministers more and more quickly. But there was one curious regularity in all those reshuffles: one senile wreck was replaced with another, as often as not even more senile;



one small-time politician was replaced with another, generally an even more faceless personage; one reactionary was replaced with another, often even more mediocre and cruel.

While 70-year old senile I. L. Goremykin, who was "taken out of mothballs" and appointed head of government in early 1914 managed to hold his post two full years, his successor with the same extreme reactionary views B. V. Stuermer survived

A cemetery of Russian soldiers.

Russian and Austrian soldiers fraternise.



only 10 months in office, A. F. Trepov who replaced him was only able to keep office for a month and a half and the last tsarist Premier, N. D. Golitsyn, stayed for a mere two months.

During the 30 war months preceding the overthrow of the autocracy, six Home Ministers were replaced, four War Ministers, four Ministers of Justice, and three Ministers of Transport, to mention just a few. Some of the resignations were openly scandalous. For example, the War Minister, V. A. Sukhomlinov, was dismissed from his post in June 1915 under pressure from the liberal public following a series of major setbacks on the front. In March 1916 he was arrested on charges of abuse of power and links with German spies. At his trial held in the autumn of 1917, the charges of treason were dropped but nevertheless Sukhomlinov was found guilty of failing to prepare the army properly for war and sentenced to hard labour for life. The sentence was later commuted to imprisonment.

Foreign Minister S. D. Sazonov, on the other hand, was dismissed through the intrigues of extreme Right-wing circles, who accused him of "subservience" to Britain and apparent sympathies for the Duma.

B. V. Stuermer, an unprincipled and deceitful man greedy to line his pockets at government expense, had no political programme of his own, which suited the tsar and the tsarina best of all. They had to part with him only because of a political row in the Duma, when Stuermer was openly accused of treason. Minister of Home Affairs, A. A. Khvostov, pocketed more than a million roubles of government money during his stay in office while the last Home Minister, A. D. Protopopov, a luckless cloth factory owner and the pro-

prietor of a big estate, never hesitated to involve himself in all kinds of financial schemes and machinations. He was famous not so much for his statesmanship as for his ability to entertain Nicholas II and his family at intimate parties in the Royal palace of Tsarskoye Selo near St. Petersburg. These were the kind of people who enjoyed the tsar's confidence and ruled a huge nation and its great people in his name.

However, the Rasputin affair was the most striking manifestation of the power crisis. Favourites are part and parcel of any feudal absolutist system, and the Russian system was no exception. But never before had such tremendous power been given to such an immoral and shady character as Grigory Rasputin. This was a reflection of the utter decay and degeneration of the Romanov regime, which gave contemporaries every right to say that the regime was "rotting at its roots."

Grigory Rasputin, a half-literate Siberian peasant, once a member of an obscure sect and a horse-thief, met Nicholas for the first time in the stormy year of 1905 and shortly afterwards won the reputation of "a holy old man" and "a prophet." His demonic stare had a magic effect on the court ladies such as the tsarina's favourite Anna Vyrubova and even on Alexandra Fyodorovna herself. Rasputin, a clever and calculating adventurer, managed to convince her that he was the only one capable of saving, by his prayers, the incurably ill Tsarevich Alexei and securing divine blessing for all the tsar's undertakings in ruling the country. Because of this everything was forgiven to Rasputin: his rudeness, his hair-raising depravity, his drunken orgies and wild extravagancies. True, Rasputin's influence, especially on the tsar, was not unlimited, and he had to be on his toes all

the time to detect the slightest change in the moods of his august patrons and heed the opinions of those around the throne. Nevertheless, in wartime not a single minister was appointed without Rasputin's blessing. His aid and support were sought (for a corresponding "remuneration," of course) by stock brokers and bankers, and there were always high-ranking officials and society ladies in his reception room waiting for an audience. "The holy man" meddled not only in domestic politics but also tried to give advice on matters of military strategy.

This all went to demonstrate the base corruption, moral decay and obscurantism in which the ruling set had become entangled. The fact that a half-literate and roguish peasant almost personified the Russian people in the eyes of the Royal couple, and that close relationship with him was regarded as a symbol of the "national spirit" of the autocratic regime, testified to the moral downfall and degradation not only of the residents of the Winter Palace but also of the entire tsarist system. That is why the attempts by some of the courtiers to salvage tsarism by wresting it away from the dirty hands of Rasputin, who compromised not only the last Romanovs but also the very concept of the monarchy, could no longer yield the desired results.

Rasputin was brutally murdered on December 17, 1916, by Dmitry Romanov, a cousin of the tsar and one of the richest men in Russia, Prince F. Yusupov, also a relative of Nicholas II, and V. Purishkevich, a Right-wing member of the Duma. However, the only response to that "patriotic" act, from the viewpoint of the highly placed assassins, was yet another step-up in the government's reactionary drive. Rasputin's shadow still loomed

large over the tsar and the tsarina, who continued to push the country towards disaster with fanatical stubbornness.

There is still a good deal of argument in foreign literature about the Russian Royal couple. Not so long ago they became the chief protagonists of the film *Nicholas and Alexandra*, which was very successful in the West. Western historians, quoting a number of reminiscences, portray an extremely well-bred, charming, modest and respectable family man. It is true, they say, that he was no great statesman but he did work assiduously for the good of Russia to the best of his abilities. Many foreign authors maintain that Nicholas fell victim to unfortunate circumstances, his own weak will and the intrigues of "dark forces" and that he was in no way a carrier of social evil. Last but not least, the shooting of the tsar's family in 1918 gave the image of the last Russian tsar a touch of martyrdom in the eyes of many Western readers, made him into a tragic figure, and turned the last years of his reign into a mixture of a thriller and melodrama.

Of course, one has to agree with the view that such a mediocrity as Nicholas II was no match for the circumstances or, to be more exact, the march of history. He used to say frankly to his Foreign Minister Sazonov: "I, Sergei Dmitriyevich, seek not to ponder too much over anything and find that this is the only way to govern Russia. Otherwise I would have been a dead man a long time ago." One could also accept, with some reservations, the view that the last tsar did have his "evil geniuses," namely, Rasputin and his own wife. But what matters is that Nicholas II himself was far from the harmless man that some of his admirers and contemporary apologists would like to portray

him as. Nicholas was fanatically devoted to the idea of autocracy and myopically believed in the affection of his subjects. He was known for his egoism and indifference to others. The tsar was particularly uninspired and mediocre man with the outlook of a colonel in the Imperial Guards. He was assiduous and had a good memory, although in affairs of state he had always been a "mini-politician." He had no vision, no scope, as it were, no ability to generalise or to foresee events. After the defeats in the spring and summer campaigns of 1915, Nicholas assumed the functions of the Commander-in-Chief of the Russian Army. At this post he demonstrated his utter lack of military ability. So Russia was ruled by a mediocre and stubborn man. At every step he sac-



Bolshevik deputies of the 4th State Duma sentenced in 1914 by the tsarist court to life in exile in Siberia for upholding the principles of revolutionary Social Democracy.

rificed the interests of the country and its people to his whims, prejudices and illusions. He was a man—and this is an unquestionable historical fact—on whose conscience was the blood of the hundreds of thousands of people killed during the massacres of revolutionaries and on the battlefields of two anti-popular, anti-national wars which were irresponsibly unleashed and so ineptly lost.

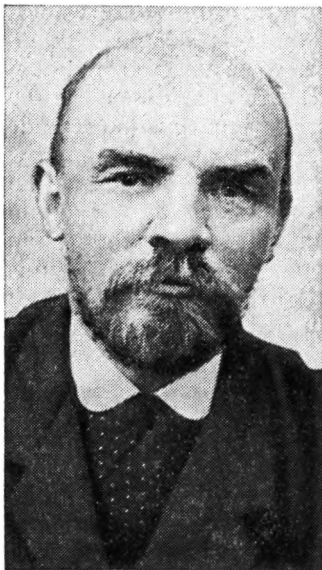
Nicholas' wife, the German Princess Alix Hesse-Darmstadt before her marriage, was an excitable and even hysterical woman. She would have liked to see her "dear Nicky" as a new Ivan the Terrible, capable of crushing any dissent. Her quarrelsome and stubborn character, her enmity towards everything Russian and her complete submission to Rasputin's influence undoubtedly played a role of no small importance in discrediting the autocratic regime both morally and politically and in bringing about its isolation. Moreover, Nicholas and Alexandra themselves were the products of a social and political system which had fully outlived its usefulness. In the final analysis it was not the various mistakes made by Nicholas II that sealed the fate of the monarchy. It was the immense weakening of the economic and social basis of the Romanov regime and its total moral discreditation even in the eyes of the ruling classes, to say nothing of the mass of the people. All these factors paved the way for a quick, almost lightning collapse of tsarism in February 1917 when the rebellious people put an end to the 300-year-old autocratic regime in only one week.

The People Fight While the Bourgeoisie Crawls to Power

The 1905-1907 Revolution in Russia was the first of the numerous revolutionary battles of the stormy

20th century, when the country was ablaze with rebellions. There were between five to seven million striking workers in the cities and at least 18,000 various peasant mutinies in the countryside. Several hundred disturbances and rebellions occurred in the Army and in the Navy and there were numerous student strikes and demonstrations and active protests from the tsarist-oppressed national minorities. These are just a few of the striking facts that characterise that period which was crucial not only for Russia but also for the rest of the world. And although the First Revolution ended in a defeat for the working people, the autocracy never fully recovered from the blow it received in 1905-1907.

A few years later the Russian proletariat rose up again to fight for freedom and independence. Short-



Lenin in emigration in Poland, August 1914.

ly before war was declared barricades appeared in the streets of St. Petersburg, as they had in 1905. In 1914 more than two million workers again went on strike in Russia to protest against the oppression of the autocracy and bourgeoisie, against militarism and the threat of a world war.

In the first months after the war began the tsarist government managed to damp down the revolutionary fire. In wartime conditions there was a sharp increase in the reprisals for the slightest manifestation of discontent with the existing system. Many revolutionary-minded workers and peasants were called up for military service and sent to the front, and part of the population fell for the chauvinistic propaganda of the tsarist authorities and the capitalist press.

Yet in the very first days of the war, Russia's progressive workers and the Bolshevik Party gave tsarism to understand that the revolutionary struggle would continue even while the country was at war. No truce with the autocracy and the bourgeoisie, "we declare war on the war"—that was the response of the Russian proletariat and its party founded by Lenin to the appeal of the ruling classes for "national unity" to defeat the external enemy. Russia's working class was the only class in Russian society that on the whole held out and resisted the turbid flood of nationalism and chauvinism, and preserved its loyalty to the principles of proletarian internationalism.

While the parties of the Second International, including most of the Russian Mensheviks and Socialist-Revolutionaries, slid into outright or veiled social-chauvinism, the Bolsheviks launched a large-scale campaign against the war. Lenin was abroad at the time at first in Poland, and since September 1914, in Switzerland. He worked out a clear-

cut programme of action for the revolutionary Social Democrats in wartime conditions. The programme's main points were: no support for the imperialist governments, chauvinism should be fought uncompromisingly, preparations should go on for democratic and socialist revolutions and for setting up a new, Third International, free from opportunism.

Lenin hated war bitterly because it brought grief and suffering to millions of working people. But he was more than just a pacifist who dreamed of ending bloodshed and returning the world to the old status quo fraught with more imperialist conflicts. Since by reason of their weakness and divisions the workers had failed to prevent the war Lenin considered that they should do all they could to use the crisis brought about by the war to bring nearer the proletarian revolution and set up a new social system without wars or violence of one nation against another. Thus Lenin stated openly that the Socialists of all the belligerent countries without exception should press for the defeat of their governments in that anti-popular war of plunder, and turn the imperialist bloodbath into a world proletarian revolution whose banner would carry the slogan: "Peace to the huts, war on the palaces!"

This statement was made at a time when "patriotic" hysteria engulfed the whole of Europe and the Socialists of the belligerent countries were openly willing to vote for military allocations in parliament. Small wonder therefore that the government and capitalist press accused Lenin of preaching national nihilism and unpatriotic feelings and even of high treason to Russia. It was also hinted that it was very easy to be a "defeatist" whilst enjoying full

personal security in a peaceful and neutral Switzerland.

However, Lenin had a hard time during that last period as an emigré in Switzerland. One cannot read without emotion the reminiscences of N. K. Krupskaya, his wife and loyal friend. At times Lenin's position in those hard years of the war seemed to her to be even tragic. There was no outlet for his colossal energy. His boundless devotion to the revolution and the working class, his clear vision of what was happening were of no use while he was an emigré. All of Lenin's activities between 1914 and 1917 were a real moral exploit for the sake of the great cause to which he dedicated his life. One of Lenin's political adversaries, Fyodor Dan, a Menshevik, once observed that he did not know any other man who, like Lenin, could be engaged in revolutionary affairs 24 hours a day. And though it



Berne, Switzerland.
The house in which
Lenin lived in 1915
and 1916.

was meant to be a malicious joke, there was much truth in the saying.

Outwardly Lenin's life during the war might seem dull and monotonous. It seemed to be devoid of anything romantic or heroic. He spent hours in the library, did a good deal of writing and editing newspapers, occasionally spoke at party meetings and corresponded with his comrades. And that was all, day in and day out, from September 1914 to March 1917, when he was at last able to return to Russia. Yet what lay behind those seemingly routine activities was the immense work of grasping the essence of the new historical epoch and prospects of world history, of rallying party forces, leading the revolutionary movement in Russia, and bringing together all who remained active and honest in the international socialist movement after the collapse of the Second International.

Lenin's slogans, thoughts and plans found their way to Russia and became a programme of action for the Bolshevik organisations that had survived the tsarist reprisals. Significantly, while European Socialists became government ministers in those days and cooperated with the bourgeoisie, the Bolshevik members of the Fourth Duma were sent to hard labour camps in Siberia by the tsarist authorities for their anti-war activities. Hundreds of their comrades were held in prisons. The Bolsheviks proved to be the only political party in Russia to protest against the imperialist war and launch immense ideological and organisational work to prepare a new revolution.

The Bolshevik organisations were led by the Central Committee of the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party and its Russian Bureau in Petrograd, which was re-established in the autumn of 1915. Although the Central Committee had its headquar-

ters in Switzerland, it kept in constant touch with Russia. The newspaper *Sotsial-Demokrat*, edited by Lenin, came out in Switzerland and was secretly brought into Russia. In Russia itself, more than 20 Bolshevik newspapers and magazines were published, most of them underground. Besides this, Bolshevik organisations in Russia put out more than 600 clandestine leaflets during the war, in a total of nearly two million copies. These were circulated in almost 200 cities and other populated centres and informed the people of the truth about the war. The Bolsheviks led all the forms of the working-class movement and were also active in the countryside, in the Army and in the Navy. They became the genuine internationalist vanguard of Russia's working class, leading the popular protest against the war of plunder.



Lenin with political emigrés leaving for Russia. Stockholm, March 31, 1917.

In view of the soaring cost of living, real wages had devalued 15 to 20 per cent by the end of 1916 as compared with 1913. Many prime necessities could be only purchased at outrageous prices while for others people had to stand in long queues. Malnutrition and cold and damp dwellings led to disease and exhaustion among the working people. Women and children were particularly hard hit. The average working day in industry, including overtime, reached 16 hours. As a result, according to police agents' reports, by the autumn of 1916, most workers were "prepared to go to the wildest excesses of a food riot" even in Petrograd where wages were slightly above the country's average.

Economic chaos, the moral decay of the ruling "summit," defeats at the front, and plans for militarising industry—it was all a source of constant disquiet and political unrest among the mass of the working people. The revolutionary work of the Bolsheviks and members of several other revolutionary organisations, especially the Left-wing Socialist-Revolutionaries, who adhered to internationalist views, intensified those feelings of spontaneous protest many times and channelled them into an organised, conscious struggle against the war and the autocratic regime.

About 250,000 workers took part in industrial actions from February to July 1915. In the following six months the number of strikers topped 430,000, and nearly half of them put forward various political demands. In 1916 more than a million workers went on strike including about 300,000 who had laid down tools for political motives. Incidentally, in wartime conditions the boundary between economic and political strikes was rather vague because any major economic strike,

especially, in war industries, assumed considerable political significance. Many strikes, which had started for economic reasons, gradually developed into political actions.

Solidarity strikes at various factories and even in various cities became widespread. In the meantime, the peasants were getting poorer and poorer. In 1917, thirty-six per cent of the peasant farms in European Russia had no horses of their own, 18 per cent did no sowing at all while 12 per cent had no land of their own. Under such circumstances, the number of peasant actions also grew steadily. About 300 were registered in 1916. In most cases these were riots against high prices, in which rural shops were smashed; later came clashes of peasants with landowners and police (refusals to pay rent for the land, protests against military requisitions, etc.). The police authorities reported that "revolutionary unrest is observed everywhere in the villages similar to that in 1905-1907. Political issues are discussed everywhere, and decisions are adopted aimed against the landowners and merchants, and cells of various organisations are set up... Therefore the peasantry will undoubtedly become a very effective part of a new, inevitable movement."

The Army and the Navy also became more and more unreliable from the viewpoint of tsarist authorities. This was evidenced by mass desertions, a sharp decline in military discipline, fraternising with German and Austrian servicemen and also in open revolutionary actions against tsarism. For example, there were 11 seamen's actions in the Baltic Fleet in 1915 and 1916, and in October 1916 the soldiers of a regiment stationed in Petrograd refused to fire on a workers' demonstration. Bolshevik military organisations carried out a great

deal of political work in the Armed Forces, in particular, on the Northern Front and in the Baltic Fleet. In late 1916 and early 1917, soldiers began to refuse more and more often to go into attack. Entire regiments refused to obey their commanders and as the tsarist generals themselves pointed out, the army was ceasing to be an army and turning into a revolutionary people's force.

Last but not least, the non-Russian peoples, oppressed by the tsar, began to join the anti-war movement in 1916. The urban and rural poor rose up in Kazakhstan and Central Asia, in early July that year, in protest against their mobilisation for military service in the rear, and the movement lasted till the spring of 1917. It was led by A. Imanov, the son of a poor shepherd, and A. Janghildin, a member of the Bolshevik Party. They formed a 50,000-strong rebel army, which waged a daring guerrilla war against the tsarist forces.

So a revolutionary situation had already developed in the country by the autumn of 1915, and by the end of 1916 Russia had come close to a new revolution. The country showed all the signs of a revolutionary crisis noted by Lenin: there was a crisis in the policy of the ruling class, the suffering and want of the oppressed classes had grown more acute than ever and, as a consequence of the above causes, there was a considerable increase in the activity of the masses, principally among the workers.

Under these circumstances, the opposition of the liberal bourgeoisie had also increased considerably. The liberals were disappointed by tsarism's major military defeats, its inability to cope with the revolutionary movement inside the country and its stubborn refusal to share power with members of the business community.

It was not the war that gave rise to the revolution. The causes of the latter were rooted in the deep internal antagonisms of Russian reality. However, the war undoubtedly brought it closer, revealing the entire rottenness of the tsarist regime, driving the mass of the people to despair and bringing the country to the brink of disaster. The war also fabulously enriched the Russian capitalists. In some cases they raked in between 300- and 1,000-per cent net profit from military contracts. General Manikovsky, in charge of munitions supply to the Army, reporting to the tsar about these phenomena, once exclaimed indignantly, "Your Majesty, this is outright robbery," to which Nicholas II gave him the rather philosophic advice not to vex the public. Yet, although the autocratic regime supplied the bourgeoisie with generous subsidies and profitable contracts, there was no question of giving it any political power whatsoever.

The activities of the war industries committees, formed in 1915, were rigidly restricted by the government to mere "assistance" in supplying the Army and the Navy with armaments and equipment while the *Zemstvo* group and the Urban League, which rallied liberal elements, dealt only with relief to the wounded and refugees and, partly, with army supplies. As for power-sharing with the bourgeoisie, that was out of the question in autocratic Russia, and the role of the Duma was limited to endless, although sometimes rather acute, debate, on various shortcomings both at the frontline and in the hinterland.

When the war broke out, the Cadets, the chief party of the Russian liberal bourgeoisie, ceased their oppositional activities. They stated openly that it was necessary to put aside internal strife during the war and to carry out the sacred duty

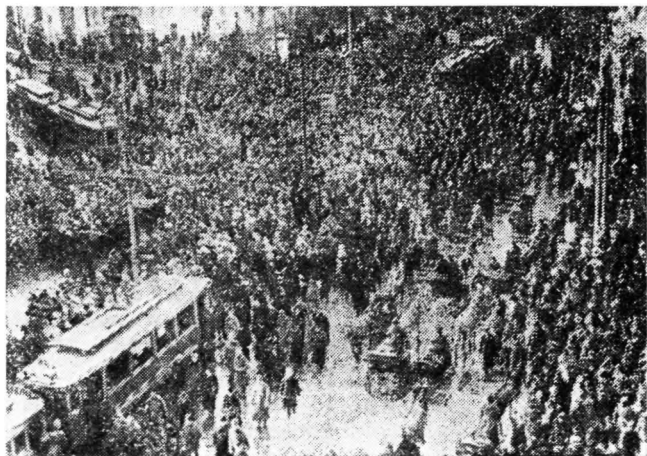
of all the Russian people, namely, to preserve a united and indivisible Russia as a great world power. However, by the spring of 1915 "the patriotic upsurge" in the bourgeois circles had already been replaced by "patriotic alarm," to be shortly followed by demands to set up a "government of confidence" involving the leaders of bourgeois parties.

In August 1915, when the symptoms of a revolutionary crisis began to make themselves increasingly felt, most of the bourgeois and landowner factions in the Duma (except for the extreme Left) and some of the members of the State Council formed a "Progressive Bloc." They demanded a minimum of political reforms to carry the war through to victory and prevent another revolution. However, the tsarist government suspended the Duma sessions in September 1915, giving it to understand clearly that there could be no talk of any reforms, much less so of setting up a bourgeois or at least a more liberal government. In response, Duma members shouted their traditional "Hurrah!" and dispersed quietly. The "Progressive Bloc," isolated from the democratic forces, called for "preserving calm" thus confessing its utter impotence. The Liberals had again shown that they could not, and did not want to, wage an open fight for power. The fear of revolution clearly outweighed their discontent with the autocracy.

When, in the autumn of 1916, the degradation of the regime became so excessive that even the tsar's closest relatives began to talk about it, members of the bourgeois opposition started to criticise the government in stronger terms, having passed from a "siege" of the regime to an "assault" on it, in the liberal sense of the word, of course. For example, P. N. Milyukov, speaking in the Duma on

November 1, accused the "court party" grouped around the tsarina, of preparing a separate peace with Germany, provoking anti-government riots, etc.

In the heated political atmosphere of those days, this speech by the Cadet Party leader evoked a good deal of comment and, though banned by the censors, was circulated throughout the country in thousands of copies. History books written by Cadet scholars and, later, the works of many foreign historians describe Milyukov's speech on November 1, 1916, as "a signal for a revolutionary assault," although the speaker and the Cadet Party he represented in no way intended it as such. Significantly, in conclusion, Milyukov stated in no uncertain terms that the Duma opposition was going to fight the government with "every legal means."



Mass demonstrations on Neva Prospekt, Petrograd. February, 1917.

Shortly afterwards, the leader of the "Progressive Bloc" S. I. Shidlovsky, came out with an even more frank statement, saying that "while the government believes that we are **making** a revolution we in fact are trying to prevent it . . . We are going to achieve nothing by assault." So the liberal bourgeoisie remained committed to the end to the tactics it had tested back in 1905. While the mass of the people openly fought the autocratic regime and opposed the war, the liberals quietly crawled to power behind their backs, hoping to strike a bargain with the regime on the division of ministerial posts.

Under such conditions the scheme to stage a palace coup appeared anything but serious. The idea was to remove Nicholas II and Alexandra Fyodorovna and pass the crown to their 12-year-old son Alexei, with the tsar's brother Mikhail Alexandrovich as regent. The plot was much talked about in certain bourgeois circles in late 1916 and early 1917. After long discussions and hesitations, a scenario for the coup emerged in general outline. The plotters were supposed to capture the tsar's train between the General Headquarters in the city of Mogilev, and Petrograd. Officers of the Guards were to arrest the tsar, force him to abdicate and send him abroad into exile. However, no practical steps had been taken for several months to prepare the coup in concrete terms. Milyukov later admitted as much when he wrote that his friends and he were "poor plotters" and all the preparations for a coup failed to exert the slightest influence on the march of history.

Russia's destiny was to be decided by a revolution and not by a plot concocted by bourgeois politicians. As Milyukov later admitted, "the Revolution of February 27 was not of our making and came against our will."

The End of the Empire of the Double-Headed Eagle

In early 1917 Russia was on the threshold of another revolution. The people's hatred for the autocracy had reached its peak. In the cities every bread queue spontaneously turned into a political rally where government policy was discussed without mincing words.

The head of the Moscow Branch of the Security Department, describing the popular sentiments, reported that such phrases as "acute exasperation," "extreme hostility," "indignation," etc. were only a very mild reflection of reality. "It can be said with confidence," he went on, "that, compared with the moods of the given moment, the sentiments of the 1905-1906 were undoubtedly more favourable to the government. . . The irritation and hostility of the masses are so great that they have ceased to be fastidious in expressing their feelings both with regard to the government and supreme power. . ."

As for the peasants, their talk centred on one thing: when was the damned war going to end? Reports about army morale were devastating for tsarism. It was stated that the Army no longer believed in victory, that soldiers saw the commanders' activities as nothing but treason and wanted to end the war as soon as possible. According to the tsarist authorities, the naval base in Kronstadt had turned into a powderkeg where the fuse was about to burn out and where an explosion might come at any moment.¹

¹ Kronstadt was a fortress and a port providing base facilities for the Navy and ensuring Petrograd's defence from the sea.

As before, the revolutionary movement was led by the working class and its vanguard was the 400-thousand-strong proletariat in Petrograd. Its revolutionary energy was born of a motley conglomerate of economic, social and political causes and was determined by its fine militant and internationalist traditions as well as the activities of the Bolshevik organisations. The revolution grew not only from the poverty and privations of a people exhausted by unbearable toil but also from their conscious protest against a war of plunder they did not need, an unjust social system, and the anti-democratic policy of the autocratic regime. About 680,000 workers went on strike in Russia in January and February 1917. Eighty-five per cent of them took part in political strikes. At the time no other country had ever had industrial actions on such a scale and of such intensity. The tsarist security department reported that "the idea of a general strike is winning more and more supporters with every passing day and becoming as popular as it was in 1905... The working masses have come to realise that a general strike and a subsequent revolution are both necessary and feasible."

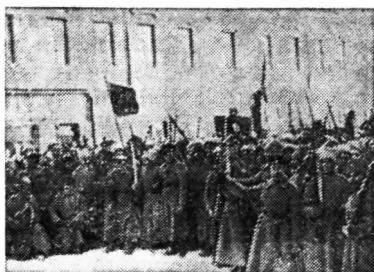
It was Petrograd that gained nationwide attention in those days. A wave of big strikes flared up there on January 9 as workers marked the anniversary of the shooting of their peaceful demonstration by the tsarist authorities in 1905. Mass industrial actions and demonstrations resumed in the capital on February 23 (March 8 according to the new style calendar) which was International Women's Day. The actions continued to gain momentum in subsequent days and on February 27 developed into a victorious uprising of workers and soldiers against the tsarist regime. Every morning thousands of workers demanding peace, bread and freedom streamed from the

outskirts to the famous Neva Prospekt in the city centre like a tidal wave. Their meetings and demonstrations were joined by students, office workers and democratically-minded intellectuals and, after February 26, by soldiers who had gone over to the side of the revolution. Revolutionary songs could be heard everywhere and slogans on red streamers and banners read, "Down with War!", "Down with the Autocracy!", "Long live the republic!"

The authorities began to put into effect their plan for "controlling riots" which had been worked out well in advance on the very first day of the revolution, February 23. However, despite the officers' desperate efforts, both the police and regular army units failed to show particular zeal. In the evening of February 23 the troops were ordered to use fire-arms against the marchers and the following day the army and police did shoot down several dozen people. However, contrary to the hopes of the tsarist authorities, the masses were not deterred. Soldiers, returning to their barracks, grumbled bitterly, "You just can't bring yourself to shoot at your own people. . . All they want is bread. . . Why should we butcher innocent folk?"

The following day soldiers began to go over to the workers' side, to give them arms, and to replace

The mutinous Petrograd garrison salutes the victory of the revolution.



the most reactionary officers. February 27 was the most crucial day of the Second Russian Revolution. In the morning, 10,000 soldiers joined the workers, followed by another 25,000 or more in the afternoon and nearly 70,000 in the evening. The rebels captured all the key points in the city: bridges, railway stations, the arsenal, the telegraph, the post office and other vital institutions. In fact, the entire city was in the rebels' hands except for the Winter Palace, the Peter-and-Paul Fortress and the Admiralty. Troops loyal to the government melted away with every hour. The President of the State Duma, Rodzyanko, sent this alarming telegram to the tsar who remained at the General Headquarters, "The situation is going from bad to worse. Steps should be taken immediately since tomorrow it will be too late. The hour has come when the destiny of the country and dynasty is being decided." But even then the tsar failed to understand that it was a full-scale revolution and not just a "food riot" in the capital. "That fat Rodzyanko has again sent me some nonsense which I shall not even bother to answer," the tsar remarked. Meanwhile, the fate of the monarchy had already been decided. Practically the whole of the Petrograd garrison, totalling about 170,000, were on the revolution's side in the daytime of March 1 and on March 3 the entire Baltic Fleet joined the revolution. Nicholas II, who travelled to the capital by train, was held in the city of Pskov and on March 2 he was compelled to abdicate both on behalf of himself and his son, in favour of his brother Mikhail. A few days later the tsar was arrested and sent first to Tsarskoye Selo with his family and later, in August 1917, to the city of Tobolsk in Siberia.

The revolution's victory in Petrograd served as a signal for bringing down the tsarist authorities

throughout the country. The rebellion in Moscow succeeded on February 28 and March 1, and during the following week the revolution spread to most of the other big cities. The picture was about the same everywhere: workers' strikes, demonstrations, meetings, and the soldiers of the local garrisons going over to the people's side. The tsarist administrative machinery had been paralysed to such an extent and revolutionary unrest in the army had gone so far by early 1917, that the February Revolution was accomplished with relatively few casualties. The number of those killed in Petrograd was 117, while in Moscow only eight people lost their lives. Everywhere the revolutionary masses set free political prisoners, occupied government offices, pulled down signs with the double-headed eagle, the emblem of the autocracy, and tore up and burnt portraits of the tsar. The most hated tsarist officials were shot on the spot under sentences passed by the spontaneously formed people's courts.

The revolution quickly engulfed not only army garrisons in the hinterland but also the army in the field. The soldiers organised demonstrations, and held meetings and rallies. Soldiers' committees were formed in army units. Officers and generals known for their particular loyalty to the tsar were dismissed and new commanders were elected from among the revolutionary-minded soldiers and junior officers. The mass of the soldiers, far from defending their august Commander-in-Chief, actively took part in toppling the autocracy, and gave a hand in the armed uprisings. An acute class struggle flared up in the Army between the revolutionary soldiers and the reactionary, monarchistically-minded officers. According to the well-known Russian general A. A. Brusilov, not more than 20 per cent of the officers followed the soldiers in joining the rev-

olution in February and March of 1917, and even those who did were not always sincere. The rest "shut themselves up in their own shells" nurturing a hatred of the revolution and revolutionaries. The frontline situation and the continuing threat of another German offensive held back the development of the revolutionary process to a certain degree. However, on the whole, the army in the field was on the side of the revolution. The army's position also demonstrated the mood of the broad masses of the peasants, who made up most of the Armed Forces. As for the rural areas, the movement against landowners started there in the spring of 1917. By March of that year several dozen peasant actions had already been registered in the country's 80 districts.

Consequently, the autocracy was toppled by the joint action of two forces, the urban proletariat and the mass of the soldiers recruited from both workers and peasants. Thus, one of the main weaknesses of the 1905-1907 Revolution had been overcome. In those earlier days the workers and the army had been on opposite sides of the barricades. It is also of greatest importance that the Russian proletariat led by the Bolshevik Party played the decisive role in the events of February and March 1917.

So far we have described only the main events linked with the overthrow of tsarism in the February bourgeois-democratic revolution. However, there was more to it than that. It is vital to know who led the struggle of the mass of the people, what position the bourgeoisie held in those days and how the problem of power, the main problem of any revolution, was resolved. It is all the more important to clarify these points because quite a few biased, contradictory, inexact and downright erroneous views on these issues are widespread in

foreign historical literature. For example, William H. Chamberlin, a well-known American historian, maintains that "the collapse of the Russian Empire on March 12, 1917, was a consequence of one of the most spontaneous, unplanned, unorganised, leaderless mass revolts in history."¹ And he is not the only one. It is also alleged that the small and weak Bolshevik organisations failed to exert any appreciable influence on the march of revolutionary events in Petrograd and Russia's main industrial centres. The British historian E. Carr does not believe that Bolshevik ideas were an important factor contributing to the victory of the February Revolution.²

Moreover, a number of foreign historians also distort the role of the liberal bourgeoisie in their works. They maintain that the liberals had paved the way for the success of the popular uprising. For example, British historian George Katkov, who is of Russian extraction, makes a sensational discovery in his book *Russia 1917. The February Revolution*. He claims that there was a wide-ranging Masonic conspiracy in those days. The plot is said to have rallied all the liberal circles opposing the autocracy and to have played a decisive role in the downfall of tsarism. It is also alleged that a ramified secret Masonic organisation involved many future ministers of the Provisional Government. According to this version (which, incidentally, is not backed by documentary evidence), the Masonic organisation pursued a clearly defeatist policy to discredit the autocracy. And, according to Katkov, it was that organisation that played the key role in the events of February 1917 and its leaders subsequently became

¹ William H. Chamberlin. *The First Russian Revolution, The Russian Review*, 1967, Vol. 26. No. 1, p. 4.

² See E. H. Carr. *Studies in Revolution*, London, 1950, p. 134.

members of the Provisional Government. Attempts are also being made to enhance the importance of the State Duma described as "the sole national assembly" during the revolution which became a natural successor to tsarism at the helm of state power since "the anonymous host of workers in collarless blouses and soldiers in grey uniforms," who had brought down tsarism, "had nothing concrete to put in the place of the old order."¹

It is not our purpose to engage in lengthy polemics with such concepts of the February Revolution. We confine ourselves to giving some factual details to help the reader to form his own opinion.

When we analyse the "mechanics" of the birth of any revolution we assume that a revolutionary explosion sums up, as it were, the results of the accumulating and deepening of social antagonisms, a process which is objective by its very nature, and the huge preparatory work the revolutionary parties have been conducting among the mass of the people in previous years. Any major revolution which draws the broad masses into political action, and is genuinely popular, cannot do without a certain element of spontaneity, and this element testifies to the great force and large scale of such a revolution and not to its weakness. However, no revolution can be purely spontaneous because the leading role of one or several revolutionary parties always makes itself felt in it in one way or another. It is also apparent that the mass of the people, i.e. the millions of workers, peasants, soldiers, students, etc. who finally become involved in the movement, develop and "mature" politically only after the movement has begun, during the course of the struggle.

¹ See William H. Chamberlin. *The Russian Revolution 1917-1921*, New York, 1935, Vol. 1, pp. 73, 80.



Mass demonstrations in support of the revolution.

All these factors were present during the February Revolution in Russia. It is true that it had not been planned in advance for February 23, 1917, either by the Bolsheviks or any other revolutionary organisation, and there was a good deal of spontaneity in the actions of the masses in those days. It is also true that the Bolshevik Party had been extremely weakened by tsarist reprisals and had only 24,000 members at the time of the February Revolution, including two thousand in Petrograd. Nevertheless, there is every reason to claim that it was the Bolsheviks, and only the Bolsheviks, that played the key role in the historic days of February 1917, although they were not the only leaders of the revolutionary masses.

The truth of this is borne out by the following facts. Petrograd's Bolsheviks had already started preparations for marking International Women's Day

in mid-February 1917. A leaflet put out on the occasion by the RSDLP Petrograd Committee called on working men and women to set up a Provisional Revolutionary Government, overthrow the tsarist regime, establish a democratic republic, introduce an 8-hour working day, and turn over all the landed estates to the peasants. When, on the morning of February 23, the strike which began in response to an appeal from the Bolsheviks developed into mass street demonstrations and disturbances, it was hard to predict whether things would come to a decisive clash with tsarism. But it was very significant that the Bolshevik leaders had already adopted the line of expanding the popular movement as much as possible on the evening of February 23. It was decided at once to step up the campaign to win the soldiers over to the workers' side and to arm the proletarian units.

The following day the decision to go over to a general political strike with a view to developing it into an uprising was finalised at a meeting held by the leaders of the Bolshevik organisations in Petrograd and the Russian Bureau of the RSDLP Central Committee. The Bolsheviks launched a large-scale political campaign at Petrograd's factories and army units in order to establish a revolutionary alliance between the Army and the people, which was crucial for the outcome of the revolution.

A leaflet put out on behalf of the Russian Bureau of the RSDLP Central Committee on February 25 contained the appeal: "Everyone to the battle! To the streets!" At the same time the Bolsheviks issued another leaflet calling on the soldiers to come over to the workers' side. On that day the party committee in Petrograd held a meeting to map out concrete measures in case the strike developed into an uprising. The measures included the building of

barricades, the capture of the telephone exchange and the power station, etc. Although about 100 party activists were arrested on the night of February 26, the Bolsheviks continued to lead the movement. Late in the evening of February 26, a meeting of the leaders of the Bolshevik organisations decided to turn the strike into an uprising. The decision of the Bolshevik leaders was made known to the party cells at factory level and became a programme of action for all the Bolshevik organisations.

On February 27, the Bolsheviks led the uprising in the city streets. A leaflet came out on the same day, calling for the election of a Soviet (Council) of Workers' Deputies. In fact the elections had begun at factory level already on February 24, on the initiative of the workers themselves. The memory of the first Soviets formed in 1905 which were the embryos of a new, genuine government of the people, lived on among the workers during the 12 years between the 1905-1907 Revolution and the February Revolution. And when the workers began to set up Soviets again, the Bolsheviks supported their initiative at once. On the same day, February 27, the Bolsheviks issued a leaflet with the Manifesto "To the Citizens of Russia!" The Bolsheviks were the first and only party to make public their political programme, slogans, and a concrete plan of further developing the revolution even before its final victory. The Manifesto called for the setting up of a provisional revolutionary government, the suppression of counter-revolutionary intrigues, and an immediate end to the war by the joint effort of the workers in all countries. The Manifesto also demanded a democratic republic, an 8-hour working day, and confiscation of the land owned by the nobility, monasteries and the tsar's family.

Thanks to their preceding activities the Bolsheviks

were prepared for any, even the most abrupt, historical emergencies and were able not only to back the revolutionary initiative of the masses at once but also to influence them considerably both from the ideological and organisational points of view. In those days the Bolsheviks were always in the frontline of the struggle—unlike the Mensheviks and Socialist-Revolutionaries who acted more as on-lookers than leaders during the revolutionary battles. Thanks to the activities of the Bolsheviks the conduct of the masses differed fundamentally from mere anarchic rioting. There was a common objective (Down with the war and autocracy!), and uniform methods of struggle. These included strikes, urging the workers at the neighbouring factories to lay down their tools, meetings and demonstrations in the city centre, fraternising with soldiers, armed actions to repulse government troops and police, and the capture of government offices and the city's key strategic points. Significantly, as the heat of the struggle mounted, the elements of the political awareness and organisation of the masses were becoming more and more pronounced. True, the extremely fast rate and genuinely colossal scope of the workers' and soldiers' movement prevented the Bolsheviks from extending their organising influence to the whole gigantic flood. Yet, compared with the other political parties, the Bolsheviks did a great deal in this respect. They also managed to impart to the struggle the correct ideological direction, although the party leader, Vladimir Lenin, was outside Russia at that time, which undoubtedly made it more difficult for the Bolsheviks to take their bearings in the complex and contradictory situation which obtained at the time.

As for the Mensheviks and Socialist-Revolution-

aries, the revolution did come as a surprise to them, and at the beginning they did not even take it seriously. The Menshevik "defencists" at first tried openly to slow down the movement and put their hopes on the State Duma. The most Left-wing of the non-Bolshevik social-democratic factions, the inter-district group, was clearly behind in the march of events and failed to call on the workers and soldiers to stage an uprising. This group included Mensheviks, Trotskyites and individual Bolshevik conciliators, who had deviated from the party. They hesitated to take action, adopting a wait-and-see line, and objected to speeding up the events. The party of the internationalist Socialist-Revolutionaries had been weakened by arrests. The Central Initiative Group of the internationalist Mensheviks had no influence among the mass of the people either. All those small groups opposed the war and the autocracy, and kept in touch with the Bolsheviks, exchanging information with them, but those contacts failed to produce any practical results. The united action of the working class during the revolution emerged from below, in the course of the fighting, and not through inter-party agreements. Nevertheless, when the Petrograd Soviet of Workers' Deputies held its first meeting on February 27 (from March 1 the Soviet also included deputies from the soldiers of the city garrison and became known as a Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies), it was the Mensheviks and Socialist-Revolutionaries that captured leading positions in it. The reason for this paradox was first of all that the February Revolution, a genuine revolution of the people and by the people, had turned Russia into a country with the greatest political freedom in the world. It awakened to political activity a huge mass of the people, which was petty-

bourgeois by its social nature. By its sheer numerical strength this mass pushed to the background, as it were, the politically-conscious workers and exerted a noticeable influence on the composition of the Soviets in Petrograd and other cities. The Mensheviks and Socialist-Revolutionaries with their pseudo-patriotic slogans of "defending revolutionary Russia against Kaiser Germany," put forward a programme which appealed more than the Bolshevik platform to the sentiments of that petty-bourgeois mass, in particular, the numerous soldiers, who were mostly peasants fresh from their villages. The petty bourgeoisie regarded the Bolsheviks as nothing but "defeatists" and "extremists."

Soldiers were in a vast majority in the Petrograd Soviet, which had two thousand of their deputies against 800 representatives of the Petrograd working class. During the war, the working class was joined by all kinds of philistine and peasant elements. Last but not least, the Bolsheviks were too involved in direct revolutionary action in the city streets and paid too little attention to consolidating their influence on the masses inside the Soviet. As a result, at the beginning, the Bolshevik representatives were in a clear minority in the Petrograd Soviet. Nevertheless, in the turbulent revolutionary



The tsar's emblem is taken down. The empire has fallen.

situation of those days, even the non-Bolshevik Soviet adopted a number of important decisions, including the famous Order No. 1 for the units of the city garrison.

However, let us return to the events of February 27. On that day the Provisional Committee of the State Duma was formed in the same Taurida Palace almost simultaneously with the Soviet of Workers' Deputies. The Committee included Milyukov, Rodzyanko and a number of other representatives of the Octobrists, Cadets, Progressists and also Mensheviks and Trudoviks. On the night of February 27 the Provisional Committee issued an appeal to the nation saying that it took the initiative in restoring state and public order and appointed commissars from among the Duma members to manage various spheres of society's life until a new government was formed. However, the Committee's very first attempt to restore "order" in the army, that is, to get the soldiers to return to their barracks and make them obey their former commanders ended in complete failure.

In response to a demand from the soldiers the Petrograd Soviet issued its Order No. 1 for the units of the city garrison. The order introduced elective soldiers' and seamen's committees in the Army and the Navy. All weapons should be placed under the control of those committees. The troops were made subordinate in their political actions only to the Petrograd Soviet and their committees. The order abolished the officers' titles, banned the mistreatment of soldiers, and gave them all civil rights. Order No. 1 was a document of tremendous explosive force. It became widespread in the army in the field and turned into the banner of the mass soldiers' movement to make the armed forces more democratic. The Duma's Provisional Committee had

to tolerate the introduction of Order No. 1 which consolidated the role of the workers and soldiers in the revolutionary struggle.

This episode showed most convincingly that the Duma politicians had no real power whatsoever. However, the Mensheviks and Socialist-Revolutionaries, who had captured leadership in the Petrograd Soviet, pursued a conciliatory policy. They were convinced that tsarism should be succeeded by the bourgeois rule and, as a result, a bourgeois Provisional Government was formed on March 3, with the Soviet's consent. The government had only one representative of revolutionary democracy. It was A. F. Kerensky, a lawyer, who led the Trudovik group and became a member of the Socialist-Revolutionary Party in March 1917. So dual power, a rare historical phenomenon, came into being—the coexistence of the Petrograd Soviet, which enjoyed strong popular support, and the Provisional Government, which was initially quite impotent. Right up to the last minute the bourgeoisie tried to salvage the collapsing monarchy and put the tsar's brother Mikhail on the throne. The latter, however, had no military force to back him up, and preferred to abdicate. The alliance of the bourgeoisie with the revolutionary elements was purely superficial—it was a forced marriage. There was nothing left for the bourgeoisie but to pay lip service to solidarity with revolution. However, the true aims of the bourgeoisie were entirely contrary to the will of the people. That is why the overthrow of tsarism completed only the first stage of the revolution, which, under those circumstances, inevitably moved forward.

The overthrow of tsarism had not yet solved the complex social problems which had given rise to the Russian revolution. The people needed not only

freedom (which, incidentally, the Provisional Government was quick to curtail) but also peace, food, land, and equal rights for all nations. Meanwhile, the capitalists prevailing in the Provisional Government (from May 1917 they were joined by Mensheviks and Socialist-Revolutionaries) right up to October 1917 were never able to solve any of the vital problems facing the country. The events of February and March of 1917 marked only the beginning of an extremely acute political struggle which led to the victory of the October Revolution eight months later.

Авенир Павлович Корелин,
Станислав Васильевич Тютюкин

1917 ГОД. КОНЕЦ РОССИЙСКОЙ ИМПЕРИИ

на английском языке

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